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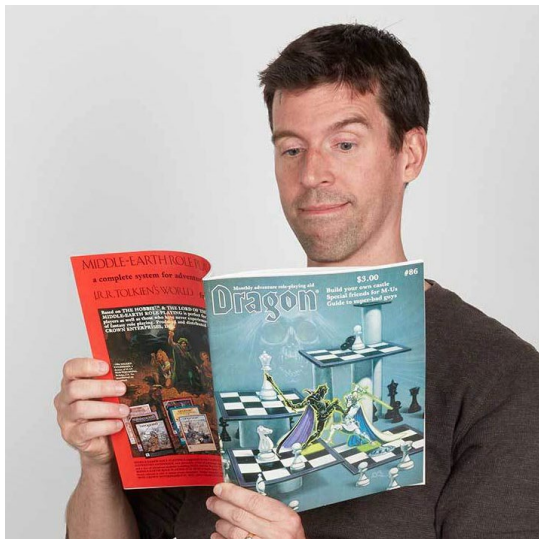
DRAGON+

CRITICAL ROLE'S
MATT MERCER TALKS
WILDEMOUNT

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS®

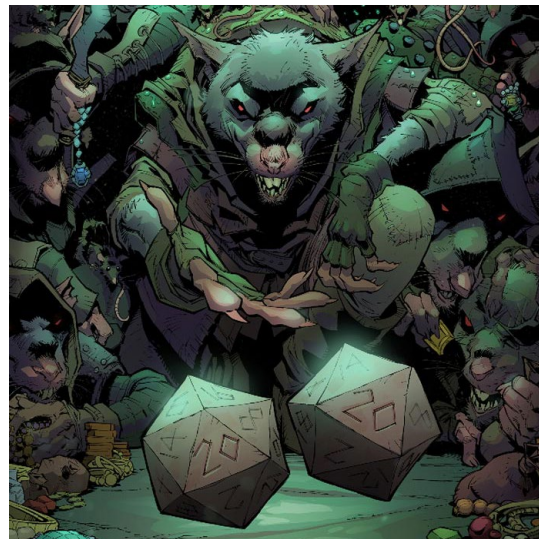
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ISSUE 30



Welcome to Dragon+ Issue 30

It's 2020—so here's wishing everyone a full year of critical successes! Unless you're a monster. In that case—die, monster, die (but also, happy new year)!



Imagining the Ampersand: Max Dunbar

Cover artist Max Dunbar talks (abyssal) turkey with *Dragon+*, as he celebrates 2020 and the Year of the Rat.



In the Works



Creature Feature:

Our roundup of (nearly) every D&D item in production right now

Moonrats

Seeing as 2020 is the Year of the Rat it's time to uncover what these creatures are really capable of.



D&D Classics: Rats

It's the Year of the Rat—as it turns out, a frequent dungeon resident, whether in regular, giant, or were-form!



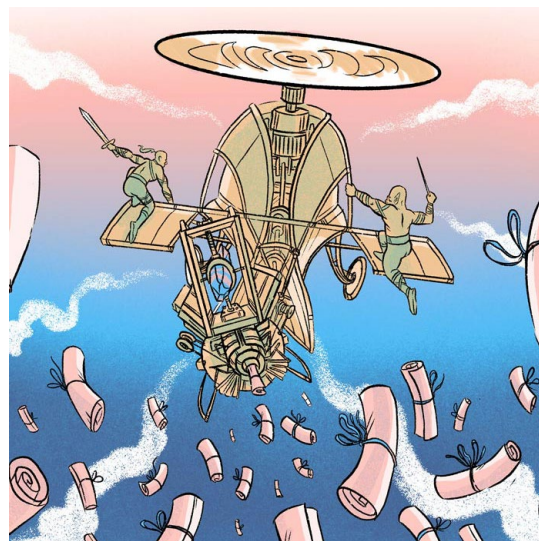
The Best of the Dungeon Masters Guild

Things get critical this issue as we celebrate failure and success, while the rats watch from the shadows.



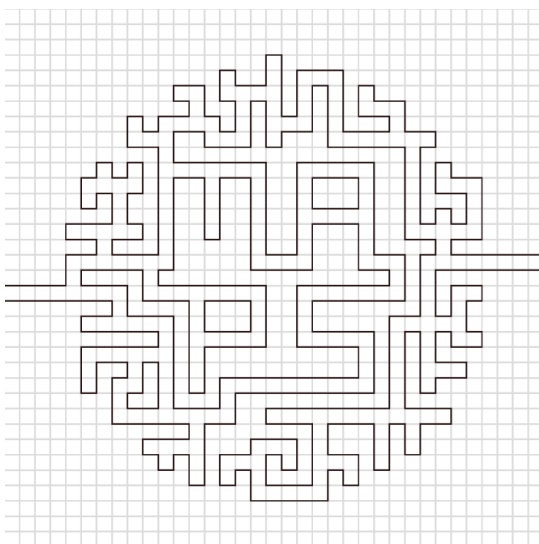
Unearthed Arcana: Subclasses, Parts One, Two & Three

Sharing new playtest possibilities for the barbarian, monk, paladin, warlock, bard, cleric, and sorcerer.

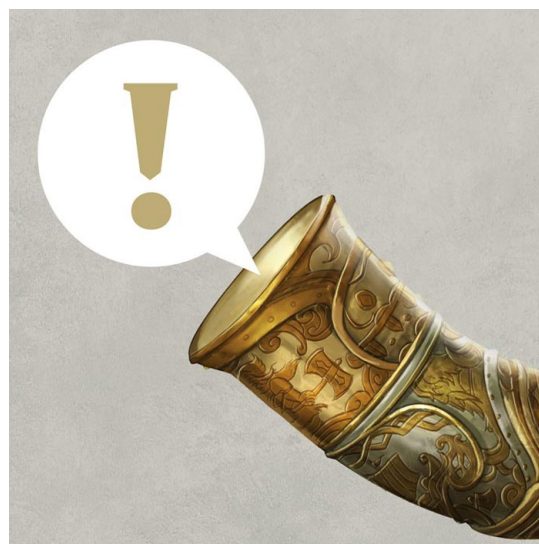


The Gribbits Detective Agency II

DM David Harmon brings the Dragon Friends podcast to your tabletop for a second outing



Maps of the Month: Eberron, Tolstoff



Streaming Highlights

This issue's highlight reel

Keep and Halaster Blackcloak's Undermountain

This issues maps provide a handy guide to Eberron and look back at Tolstoff Keep and Halaster Blackcloak's Undermountain!

includes Chris Perkins weaponizing backstories, political intrigue in Dark Sun, and a campaign full of fantasy authors.



20 House Rules for Fifth Edition

It's said that the house always wins—or in this case, rules. Sam Hanshaw offers up 20 house rules (for 2020, naturally) to use around your game table!



Next Issue: Dragon+ 31

Our travels take us to the United Kingdom and beyond, before we get stomped by kaiju!



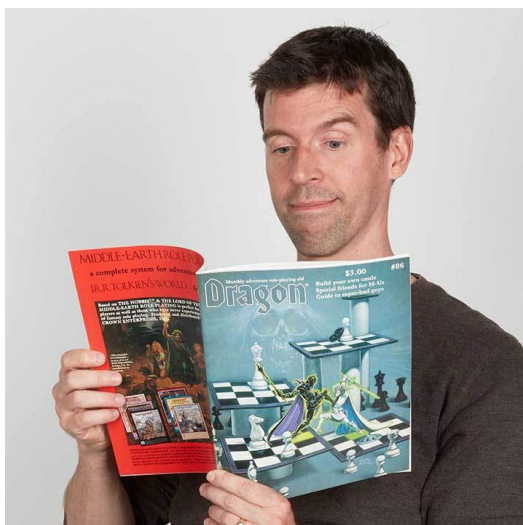
A belated happy new year and a big thank you to everyone involved with the creation of this issue.

DRAGON+ 30

Welcome to Dragon+ Issue 30

It's 2020—so here's wishing everyone a full year of critical successes! Unless you're a monster. In that case—die, monster, die (but also, happy new year)!

Bart Carroll



Bart Carroll

Hi folks,

It was inevitable. We're well underway with a year of jokes, memes, and general well-wishes when it comes to tabletop gaming. It's 2020 after all—the year of critical success! And we've already gotten New Year's Day out of the way—1/1/2020, the day of double critical success *and* failure... which may help explain why my beloved alma mater Wisconsin Badgers appeared in

the New Year's Day Rose Bowl only to lose (again), this time to Oregon.

2020 is not the year of the duck or the badger, however. According to Lunar New Year celebrations (which began on January 25th), we're now in the Year of the Rat.

Way, way back in the olden days of 1997-99, I volunteered to teach English in Sichuan, China (along with my fellow “wizard” here at

Wizards of the Coast and VP of HR, Holly Barbacovi, who was part of the same cohort). I still remember the celebrations that took place there over the Lunar New Year, which included—for me at least—way too many rounds of **baijiu** (a clear liquor that could fuel the *Millennium Falcon*). 1998 was celebrated as the Year of the Tiger, and 1999 as the Year of the Rabbit.

But as we're now celebrating the Year of the Rat, it seemed only fitting this issue to look back at rats as they've appeared in D&D in all their many guises (including the moon rat). Further down the calendar, there's a lot more going on this year. For one, the 2020 Olympics are scheduled to take place in Tokyo (whose mascot is Miraitowa, the robot cat). I'm a huge fan of the Summer Olympics myself. My high school sport was wrestling, which I still enjoy seeing in competition (whether Olympic or **otherwise**).

And while the decathlon is far more well-known, Sam Hanshaw (writing this issue's *Behind the Screens*) recommends the modern pentathlon. In that event, athletes compete in a 3.2km cross-country run, a 200m freestyle swim, as well as pistol shooting, épée fencing, and show jumping—skills seemingly designed to select the next greatest superhero or international spy. In any case, we'll also look at competitions in the world of D&D in a future *Dragon+*!



GENIUS AT WORK

I thought you'd like to see my suggested art order for this issue's cover, which combined 2020 and the Year of the Rat. That's a d20 modron backed up against an alley wall, facing down a rat onslaught. Ultimately, we took things in a different (and superior!) direction.

And speaking of criticals, you no doubt saw the announcement for the *Explorer's Guide to Wildemount*—the fantasy setting coming your way from the folks at *Critical Role*. We peek into it later this issue with our personal guide Matt Mercer and also explore more of the recently announced products and livestreams taking place this year. There's *Scooby-Doo: Betrayal at Mystery Mansion*! Our next

D&D/*Magic: The Gathering* crossover! Even a new Beadle & Grimm *Eberron* Gold Set!

It's a big year all around. From all of us at *Dragon+*, here's to a year of critical successes. We look forward to celebrating them with you and continuing to deliver fantastic D&D news and content to your favorite devices all year long.



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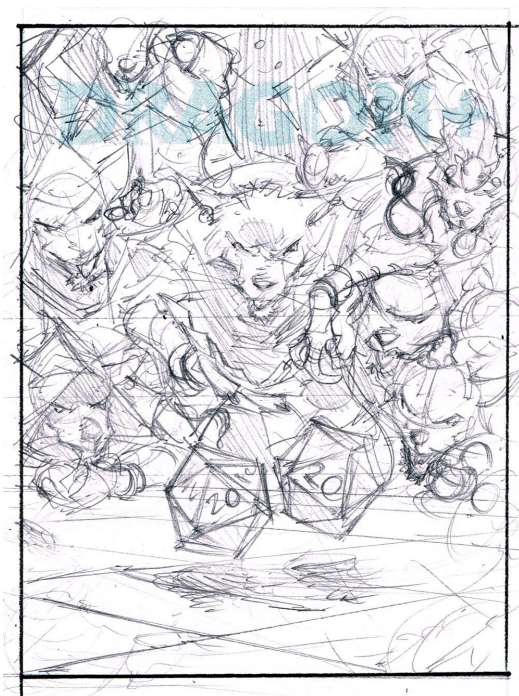


Imagining the Ampersand: Max Dunbar

Cover artist Max Dunbar talks (abyssal) turkey

with *Dragon+*, as he celebrates 2020 and the Year of the Rat.

If you're wondering why our cover is crawling with rats this issue, it's in celebration of our first issue of 2020. Not only does that year signify a double critical success but it's also the Year of the Rat this Lunar New Year, and we needed an artist who could turn that D&D staple into something truly menacing. Our cover artist earned his spot following some amazing creature resurrections for charity (more on that below) and is also well known for his talented take on recent D&D comics.



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“The key to drawing a good wererat? I tried to make them look crafty, cunning, and grimy! All living on top of each other in the sewers,” Max Dunbar tells *Dragon+* as we get our first look at his cover art. “I love the wererat art in the *Monster Manual* so all the wererats on the cover are based heavily on that design. But I wanted to show them within their society using a variety of expressions so they’re not quite as terrifying as the rampaging wererat in the original art.”

Readers trying to spot an ampersand hidden in there should keep an eye out for the tails of the rats that are hanging out with the group in the top right.”

For other projects, it's hard not to picture Max Dunbar with a shovel in his hand, standing waist deep in soil. That's because a recent artistic task has seen him digging up D&D monsters, gently excavating their corpses and performing an act of necromancy to breathe new life into them. He says it was amazing to learn that there are elements of early Dungeons & Dragons which still haven't been reinvented yet.



(Select to view)

“The D&D team wanted to create an **updated *Fiend Folio*** using a lot of monsters that hadn’t really been looked at since first edition, in aid of **Extra Life**. To think after all these years that there are still creatures to revisit is mind blowing. It really speaks to the depth and breadth of the sheer number of creations that exist out there,” he says.

“Richard Whitters asked me if I’d be interested in redrawing some of them as black and white illustrations to harken back to those first edition *Fiend Folio* images. It was a really cool thing to be involved with.”

We spoke to Dunbar back in Issue 27, when he shared his concept art from *Baldur’s Gate: Descent Into Avernus* (**his *hellscape sketchpad*** is worth checking out simply to hear the story of the creation of the abyssal chicken, and many of those early sketches can be found in the ***Baldur’s Gate: Descent Into Avernus Dice & Miscellany***). His work on the updated *Fiend Folio* tackles such classic creatures as the blindheim, the crabman, the eye of fear and flame, the fog giant, the needlefolk, and the xill.

“Richard sent me a list of six creatures that he picked out for me to take a swing at. They’re subjects he thought I’d have fun with and each one is different from the next, covering the whole spectrum. The blindheim is a subterranean frog creature and the crabman is exactly how it sounds, while the eye of fear and flame is a very cool mysterious creature that roams the underworld,” he explains.

“Most of these creatures have only ever had one design and those original designs are fantastic. Trying to figure out how would I interpret them and put my spin on them was a really fun challenge.”



What was it like to recreate the traditional black and white style of the original *Fiend Folio*?

I work in ink mostly so it was right in my wheelhouse. I stuck quite closely to the style of that original artwork, which is proper old

school. The stark black and white is like line art and is not painterly at all.

Was there a particular image you enjoyed creating?

I enjoyed working on all of them but the eye of fear and flame was probably the one that I had the most fun with. Even the description of this skull figure invokes a terrifying mood and you immediately have an idea where you're going to go with it. It was a fun challenge to try and figure out if each monster was supposed to be terrifying or not and some of the others took a little more exploration. In the original first edition illustration, the crabman looks downright pleasant! You wouldn't want to hurt him, you'd want to try and make friends with him. I tried to straddle the line of making him look intimidating but not fully terrifying because I get the impression that's not their deal. You have to find a balance. But the eye of fear and flame is definitely a scary, grim reaper-type monster.



Given your line-art style, do you still use a traditional sketchpad or do you work digitally?

It's traditional for me and I went full pencil and ink. I'd read the description from the first edition *Fiend Folio*, look at the art, and then gather some reference material. The blindheim, for instance, is a frog-type character so I looked up images of frogs to try and figure out what little details I could pull from a photo. Blindheim bite so I also looked up snake mouths, which have an interesting, unique look. I made a collage of images and that sat on my computer screen while I sketched.

I like to use photos as a starting point for ideas rather than copying from them directly. You might pull an idea for the blindheim's eyes or the shape of its head from one type of frog, then use a different frog as a starting point for its fingers. I build on that pencil sketch and there's a lot of erasing as I figure out the pose. Once I'm relatively happy with it I finalize it with inks. I do sometimes color digitally but I like the feel of paper and a pencil and pen. It's nice to have a physical piece of art once you're done.



Your Twitter followers get to see lots of sketches. What kind of reaction do you get when you post a well-known character such as **Arkhan the Cruel**?

If you draw any fan art of a character that has appeared on *Critical Role* the community is so supportive but I was pleasantly surprised by the amount of enthusiasm for that one. He's such a popular character that you get a great response when you do a sketch, even an incomplete one.

When you focus on a character such as Arkhan, do people assume he's going to be in the *Dungeons & Dragons* comic?

I wrote specifically that I was just doing that sketch for fun and people asked, 'Why do you need to say that? You could simply tweet that you're drawing Arkhan, you don't have to describe that it's for fun.' But since it's possible in the grand scheme of things that Arkhan could show up in a D&D comic, I want to make it clear that the drawing is not official.



You did actually **draw Joe Manganiello into the comic**. How did that come about?

I worked with Joe quite a bit last year, designing a bunch of his D&D characters for the *Baldur's Gate: Descent Into Avernus* campaign. He's such a big D&D fan and a super nice guy that I thought it'd be fun to include him in the comic book and he thought it would be a cool cameo. You often have to draw crowds or populate taverns so I dropped him

in there. I gave him a little Tiamat brand on his hand as a tribute to Arkhan.

We love *Baldur's Gate: Descent Into Avernus*'s abyssal chicken. But the **abyssal turkey** you drew for Thanksgiving was incredible...

I have to give a shout out to **Beadle & Grimm** as they were the inspiration for it. Around Thanksgiving the company used 'Abyssal Turkey' as part of its name on Twitter. I thought that was a really funny idea and decided I should sketch what it would look like. Essentially, it's the bigger, uglier version of an abyssal chicken. I went way too far with it and even threw some colors on there before I posted it but the guys at Beadle & Grimm loved it.



Do you still draw simply for the enjoyment of it?

One thing a lot of people might not fully appreciate is that I love drawing so much that even after I've finished a twelve-hour day, I still like to pick up a pencil and doodle something else. I feel very lucky to work on material that I'm so interested in—there must be tons of people that'd kill to work on a Dungeons & Dragons comic book! I definitely don't take it for granted. The work I did for *Baldur's Gate: Descent Into Avernus* was pure concept art and I didn't expect any of it to make it into the final product. It's therefore very cool to see official D&D stats next to the images I have worked on from the first edition *Fiend Folio*.

When did you first play D&D?

My brother-in-law knew I had never played D&D but was very keen to try it. One day he said, 'I've got a couple of coworkers who are

also interested. Do you want to join us?’ I said, ‘Absolutely.’ I had really no expectations and once we had solidified the group, I watched a couple of *Critical Role* episodes to suss out the actual gameplay side of it. We’ve been playing ever since, a couple times a month. Our DM is a guy called Ricardo and he’s phenomenal. He’s been putting up with our crazy antics for the past three years.

I play a dwarf wizard who is now level nine having worked his way through the *Curse of Strahd* campaign. We began with the *Starter Set* and the *Lost Mines of Phandalin* scenario, then followed that up with some homebrew. But Ricardo knew that we really wanted to try *Curse of Strahd* because everyone touts it as being one of the best ever D&D campaigns. It took us a really long time to get through and it felt like a survival horror but it was tons of fun!

You can see more of Max Dunbar’s work on [his website](#) and in the pages of [IDW’s Dungeons & Dragons comic](#), and connect with him on [Twitter](#). All proceeds from *Mordenkainen’s Fiendish Folio, Volume 1: Monsters Malevolent and Benign* go to Extra Life, in support of local Children’s Miracle Network Hospitals.

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EVENTS RUN MARCH 2020



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*Example paint scheme by RealmSmith

IN THE WORKS



PREVIEWS

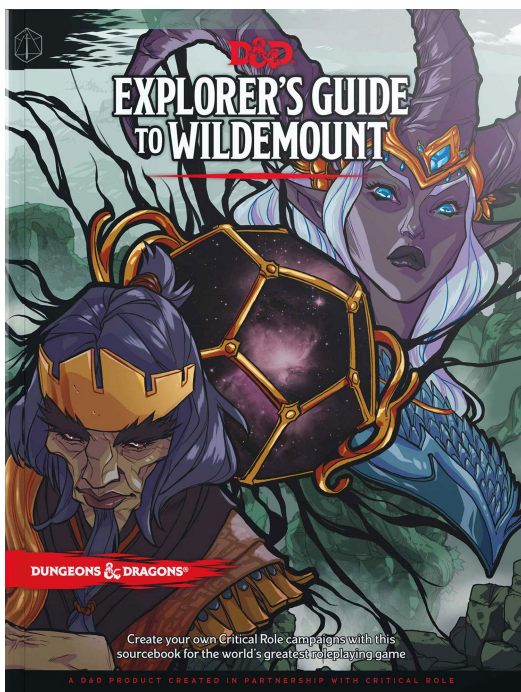
IN THE WORKS



Explorer's Guide to Wildemount

Join our tour of the hot new products coming soon to a tabletop near you...

Join our tour of the hot new products coming soon to a tabletop near you...



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“It’s been a wild experience,” Matt Mercer says when we ask about the continued success of livestream behemoth *Critical Role*. “None of us expected anywhere near this level of attention. It’s equal parts exciting and scary, if that makes any sense. We’re really thankful for the opportunities and are carefully taking each step.”

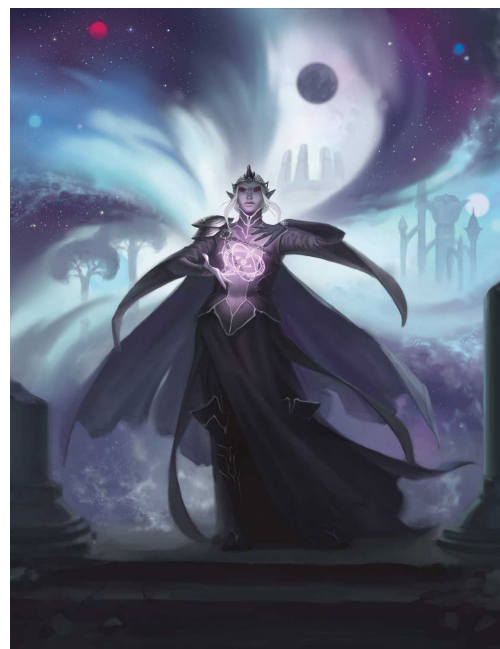
With a *Critical Role: The Legend of Vox Machina* animated special in production following a massive \$11.4 million Kickstarter campaign, it shouldn’t have been a

surprise to see an official D&D fifth edition sourcebook based in Mercer’s world shoot to Amazon’s number one bestseller spot based on preorders alone.

“No pressure! I’m still processing it. It’s still so weird and crazy, I hope this doesn’t ever seem like a normal thing for us. I really don’t.

We understand and respect the amount of good faith people are putting into us to do the things we do, and there's a very strong sense of responsibility. But everyone who's helped me on *Explorer's Guide to Wildemount* has done an incredible job. I'm very proud of the work we've all done and I'm excited for people to get their hands on it."

No one can accuse the *Explorer's Guide* of skimping on content. Boasting 304 pages on everything from Wildemount's creation myth to its geography, while also cataloguing its deities, races, subclasses, creatures, and unique spells and artifacts, it's guaranteed to bring the continent fully to life. Even the most ardent Critter who has devoured every episode of the *Critical Role* livestream will find plenty to surprise them.



Irina Nordsol (select to view)

"A lot of these elements existed as general themes in my head, just not as detailed and fleshed out. As any Dungeon Master knows, there's only so much you can write and create when you're running a campaign because there's only twenty-four hours in a day and we're all paltry mortals. You usually flesh out your world as the players encounter it, but I have now had to do that entirely, which was a unique challenge. Thankfully I have good people helping me to carry some of that bandwidth and bringing their creative ideas to my broad strokes."

Part of the process of fleshing out Wildemount has been the creation of a gazetteer. This classic D&D term used to refer to a complete overview of a region: from its economics and geography to wider sociological elements and its place in history. It's a fitting use given the level of detail included in the sourcebook.



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“This guide doesn’t only contain maps and location information, it breaks down Wildemount region by region. That includes information about the mood and feel of a place alongside the racial diversity of a location, the population variance, titbits about the military and who’s in power in the region, as well as detailed sidebars explaining specific locations or experiences that can be found there,” Mercer reveals.

“A lot of the locations have one or more plot hooks designed to inspire a DM to incorporate a cool little element within their campaign. There’ll also be some Easter eggs in there for fans of the show, and a few nice reveals that the players and viewers never got a chance to see. I’m excited for folks to start running into those too.”

LISTEN TO MATT MERCER ON THE DRAGON TALK PODCAST

SPELLS AND SUBCLASSES

Explorer's Guide to Wildemount also contains a new type of magic called Dunamancy, which builds on the existing magical practices within fifth edition D&D. This magic originates in the Kryn Dynasty,

although it has spread beyond the drow into the rest of the world. Mercer describes it as dealing with the fabric of the universe and having its basis in science, suggesting it's the type of magic Isaac Asimov or Carl Sagan would wield if they were wizards.

“Dunamancy is a magical school dealing with time, space, quantum physics, and astrophysics, focusing on probability, potentiality, the realization of timelines and alternate realities, the passage of time, entropy, and all of these facets. There is a lot of gravity and minor time manipulation,” he says.



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“They’re very much dealing with the fabric of the universe, using the base idea that matter itself can be manipulated in many ways. It’s a little high concept and there’s more to wrap your brain around, but the spells themselves inform the overall theme much better. For example, a spell like *dark star* essentially creates a small singularity that sucks everything in and deals force damage. It’s like a tiny black hole in the middle of the battlefield.”

The Dunamancy spells in the sourcebook will be available for use by three subclasses, although Mercer suggests a deity could also grant the spells as boons to any magic user. These three subclasses are:

- **Echo Knight**

“The echo knight is a fighter subclass, which plays into the multiple timeline theory and uses anticipatory energy. There’s a vibration towards making strong choices in your life. When you make those choices, you solidify the next future timeline while other possibilities eventually decay and fall away. An echo knight has the ability to temporarily pluck an echo of themselves, one of these shades of an unrealized timeline, into their own reality. This shadow of themselves can fight alongside them and has a bunch of really fun utility options, both in and out of combat. An echo might aid a character or attack on its own, and can move and exchange places with them on the battlefield. I think people will enjoy playing this very mobile and flexible fighter.”

- **Chronurgist**

“The chronurgist has the ability to manipulate time. They are more naturally in tune with the flow of time around them so they can get the jump on enemies by improving their initiative using their intelligence modifier. They can also cast spells and lock them at the moment of casting, so those spells can be utilized at a later time. Their abilities also enable them to temporarily place an enemy in stasis and remove them from the fight.”

- **Graviturgist**

“A graviturgist can adjust the density and gravity of themselves and the things around them. They can make objects easier to carry by making them weigh half as much, or make people weigh twice as much so they are a little sturdier and move more slowly. They can help an ally move more quickly towards a target to inflict additional damage or make a target fall harder. The gravity wells they create around the creatures they attack can also help them move those creatures around the battlefield, like chess pieces on a board.”

GODLY ARTIFACTS

The world of Wildemount also contains a number of incredible magic items for players and NPCs to collect and wield. These *Vestiges of Divergence* actually grow with a character and become more powerful as they advance. Rather than being something that happens when a character levels, these improvements occur during suitably epic in-game moments and represent a moment of growth for the

character as well.

“There is no mechanical method for the advancement of the *Vestiges*, it is always based in story. The point at which they level up might be tied to specific character goals or happen during moments of great crisis or victory. Perhaps a player runs into a longtime rival and during a showdown with them is about to fall. In that final moment, their weapon may suddenly awaken and advance to give them a boost of additional strength in a truly cinematic moment. We offer lots of suggestions on how the Dungeon Master chooses the moments they allow that to happen,” Mercer says.



(Select to view)

“A handful of the *Vestiges* are neutral, but a whole cluster of them are tied to the history of the betrayer gods and would be considered weapons or objects of dubious morality. You could give them to your villains or even give them to your players and have them wrestle with what is essentially an evil artifact. Do they use it to do good things, or embrace it and do bad things? That’s up to them.”

With so many new spells and artifacts to kit party members out with, it’s almost possible to feel sorry for the monsters on the continent of Wildemount. That would be a mistake. The *Explorer’s Guide* contains 23 new creatures, many of which are specific to the world and pretty nasty. Some are the remnants of a war between ancient

magic-using societies in the Age of Arcana, where the feuding parties bred monstrous, experimental creatures to use against their enemies. Others were left behind by the demonic betrayer gods at the end of the previous age and now roam the wastes as natural creatures.

Whether you encounter those beasts depends on where you begin your adventures in Wildemount. Mercer came up with the idea for the modular set-up in *Waterdeep: Dragon Heist*, where the adventure had four possible villains depending on which season it was in the city. *Explorers Guide to Wildemount* offers four possible starting scenarios across the continent in a similar fashion, adding more replayability to the sourcebook.

FROM VIEWER TO PLAYER

Critical Role has played a big part in helping bring new audiences to Dungeons & Dragons, and the success of its fifth edition sourcebook suggests many of those viewers will be venturing into Wildemount themselves. Mercer says it would be immensely satisfying to carry their audience along with them and turn them from viewers into regular players.

“That was a big point of inspiration for even wanting to create this book. I’m hoping it definitely helps bring more people to the game by showing them how easy it is to play,” he says. “There will be many folks whose first real introduction to D&D might’ve been *Critical Role*. If they feel like they know Wildemount from following our show and we provide a familiar place in this comprehensive guide, I hope they’ll pick it up, read it, and be excited and inspired to run a game. I want them to say, ‘I’ve watched this show for a hundred-plus hours, I get the mood, I get the themes, I’m going to go ahead and grab some dice and get some friends together and run my first adventure.’”

Explorer's Guide to Wildemount is released on March 17, 2020 with an MSRP of \$49.95 and is available to **preorder now**.

MAPS OF WILDEMOUNT



Artist Deven Rue shared a map of Tal'Dorei on Twitter to celebrate the Vox Machina campaign, and found herself becoming the official mapmaker for *Critical Role*. She tells *Dragon+* how her colorful style and eye for detail bring the settings alive in the *Explorer's Guide to Wildemount*.

How did all of this start?

The funny thing is that Matt Mercer and I followed each other on Twitter before I became his cartographer. I'm a huge fan of the show and when it reached the end of the first campaign, Taliesin Jaffe said his character Percy would hire artists to tell the tale of Vox Machina. In response I made a commemorative color map of Tal'Dorei and posted it online, tagging Matt. I wanted to send him the original so we were chatting and I said, 'If you ever need a map, just let me know.' His response was, 'Well, we are starting a new campaign....' He asked if I could draw something so they could have it made into a prop map and I thought that was funny, because not only do I make full-on prop maps for my own players, I've also done the same thing for plays and productions, cosplayers, and a lot of other people. We worked out the details and I made the first map. It came out looking fantastic and he loved it.

And that relationship has continued?

I didn't know if Matt would ever ask me to do another map but when

the story went into another area, I jokingly said, 'I guess we're working on another map then?' He replied, 'Yeah, I'll send you the stuff soon.' And it just kept going from there.

Your work will also now feature in an official D&D product. What does that feel like?

The 14-year-old me is still having a really, really hard time processing it. Does not compute. I don't know if it'll ever sink in, even when I have the book in my hands in its tangible form.



How did you first get started making maps?

I made a prop map of *Skyrim* because I'm a huge *Elder Scrolls* fan and the internet went crazy over it. Everybody was asking, 'Can you sell me a Skyrim prop map?' and my reply was, 'No, it's copyrighted!' Then people started asking if I could make a map of their homebrewed worlds. I'm so used to people who homebrew content and draw their own maps as part of that, it just didn't occur to me up until that moment that I could make maps for other people.

Is there one map that's the most popular?

The **Steppes of Augrudeen** is my most popular map. It's very colorful. It encompasses a wide range of biomes and has all these waterfalls flowing into a river. It took me roughly eight weeks to make. My most downloaded map is **Faerûn and the Sword Coast**.

What will we find in the *Explorer's Guide to Wildemount*? Because a guide needs plenty of maps!

We have 16 maps in total. That includes the beautiful map showing the continent of Wildemount, which Chris Perkins quickly flashed when he was talking on D&D Beyond. It's a nice big map that can be folded out, and we wanted it to have a really olde-worlde feel to it.

What was the biggest challenge?

We've also got some city maps, which are a little terrifying to work on. As an artist it's hard to draw something that we have all imagined in our heads. Matt describes every little detail, so I've tried to keep it as close to his vision as possible because I don't want to break someone else's immersion in the story. I still try and give every map its own personality and that usually involves a really interesting palette of colors. I actually wondered if they'd ask me to tone that down a little because I color the roof of each individual house on my city maps.

Will the maps instantly give us a feel for the places they depict? Even though the maps we use today are functional, maps can be used as propaganda. It's a way for a kingdom to manipulate the way we see them, and they might claim they are a much more impressive territory than they actually are. You can see that with the map I made of the Dwendalian Empire. Its kingdom is the main focus and when you reach the borders everything else instantly fades to the background, because they don't care about anything outside of their territory.

We love that your website is called Rue Ink. It sounds like somewhere people go to get a tattoo they know they'll definitely regret!

The hilarious thing is that Rue obviously means to regret but it also means road. And my first name means divine. It's either a divine regret or a divine road.

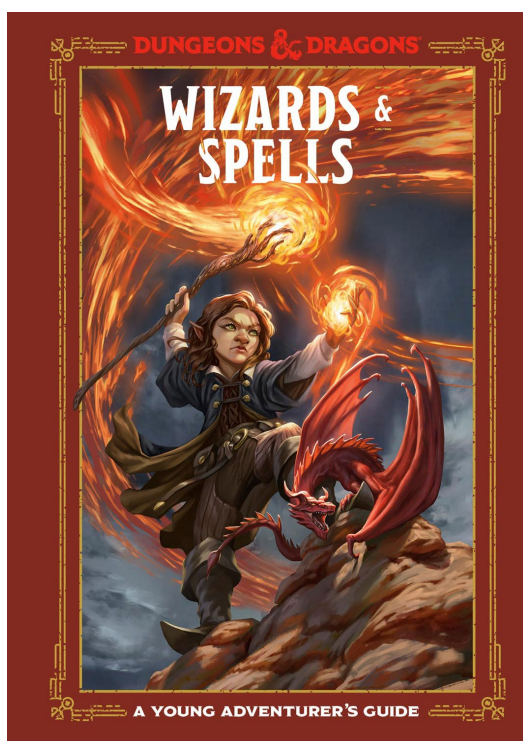
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IN THE WORKS



D&D a Young Adventurer's Guide: Wizards & Spells

Continue our tour of the hot new products coming soon to a tabletop near you...

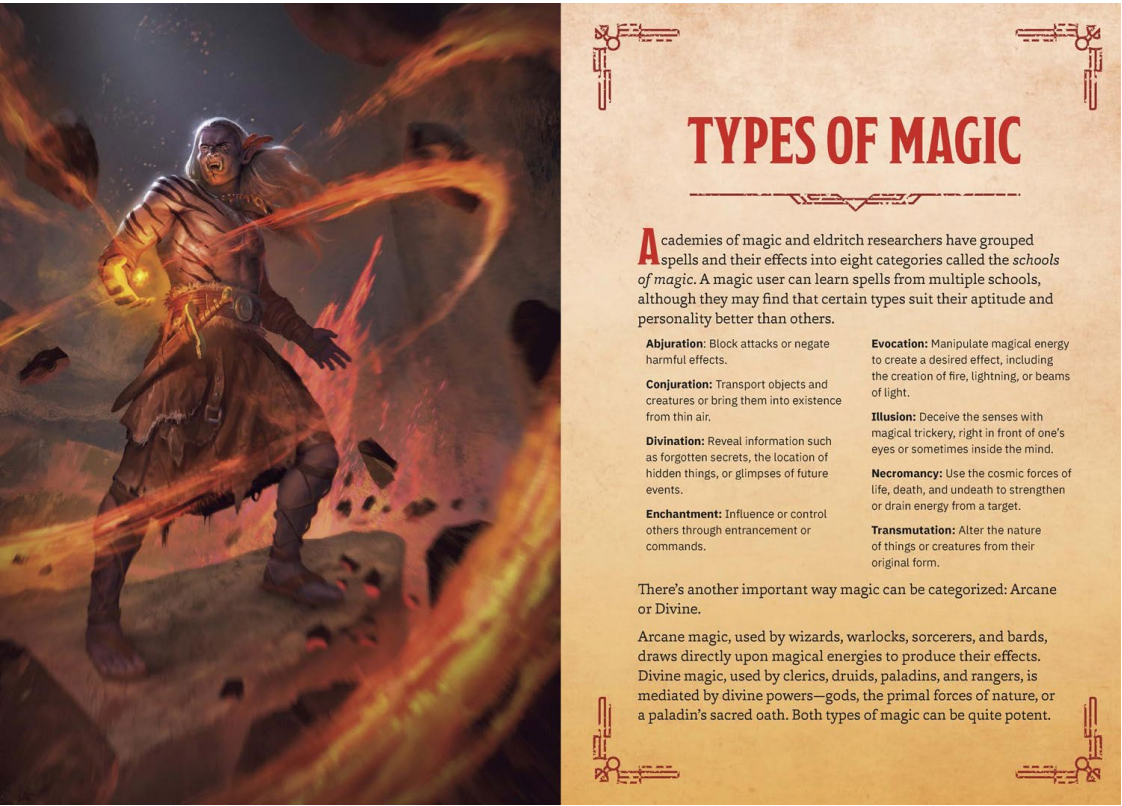


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Listen to a conversation about Dungeons & Dragons for long enough and talk eventually turns to the most memorable, surprising and creative uses of magic in the roleplaying game. Whether it's pinning dragons to the ground with *immovable rods*, poor potion choices that accidentally make gelatinous cubes resistant to damage, or stopping NPCs from blowing the party's cover by casting *create water* in their mouths, part of the magic of D&D is—fittingly—its magic.

A Young Adventurer's Guide: Wizards & Spells brilliantly taps into this ability to spark creative roleplay and unpredictable stories. The fourth instalment in the series (joining *Warriors & Weapons*, *Monsters & Creatures* and *Dungeons & Tombs*) shines its spotlight on a variety of spells, casters and magical items to offer the perfect entry point for curious young players. Or as co-writer Stacy King puts it, “for anyone who has wanted to feel the power of the universe

coursing through their veins in a fictional setting.”



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Young Adventures

King knows this feeling well, having played Dungeons & Dragons since childhood, although the *Young Adventurers* series is her first time writing for D&D. Her fond memories of running dragon-stuffed dungeons for her younger brother stand in stark contrast with co-writer Andrew Wheeler’s experience, as he recalls watching from the sidelines as his cousins played.

This combination makes King and Wheeler (alongside writer Jim Zub) the perfect team to craft a book that is both a great starting point for young players and an entertaining and enjoyable read for fans of fantastical magic. No mean feat, given that the writers have had to find a way of making one of the game’s more complex elements easy to understand for first-timers.

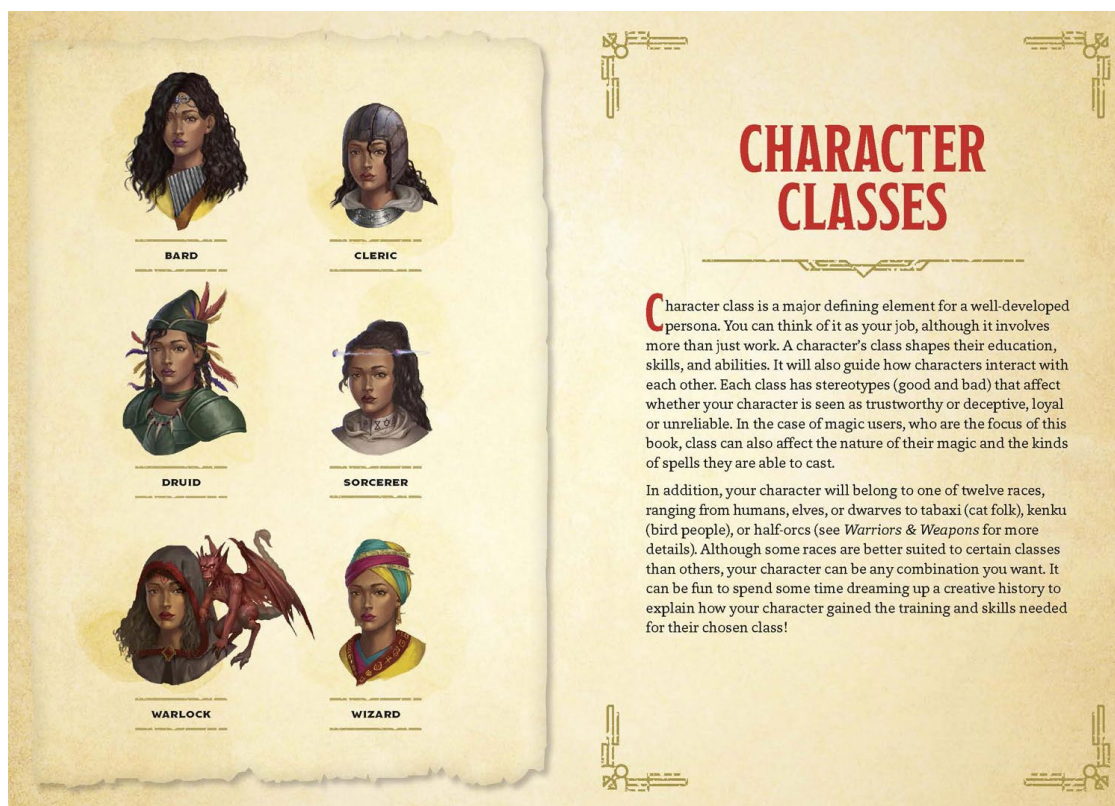


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“One of the things we’re really focused on in the books is storytelling. We’re not really getting into the crunchy rules yet. This is about character and collaborating with your friends to tell an exciting adventure,” says King. “We’re not making another *Dungeon Master’s Guide* as these books serve a different purpose. The intent is really to spark the imagination, so the rules and numbers have all been stripped away,” Wheeler adds.

The resulting guide makes magic accessible even for the uninitiated. A flow chart places readers only a few questions away from finding their ideal spellcasting class, and the varying schools of magic are swiftly demystified. The featured spells and items range from the iconic (*invisibility*) to the lesser known (*Nolzur’s marvelous pigments*, a favorite of King’s), giving a sense of the power a character might wield as they develop over a campaign.

In placing storytelling first, *Wizards & Spells* focuses on the possibilities and excitement magic offers players, rather than the conditions that need to be satisfied before casting can even begin. This guide instead cuts straight to what it would feel like to heal someone’s battle wounds with the touch of your fingertips or will an *ice storm* into existence.

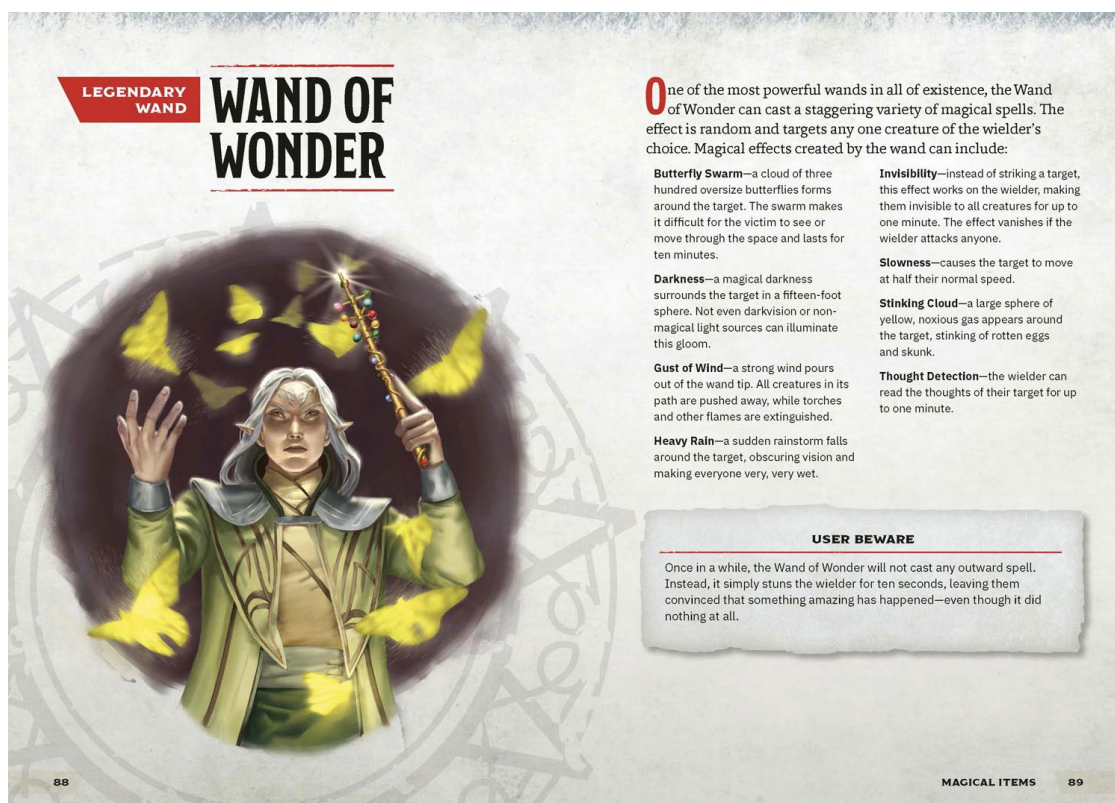


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Art Lovers

The book's descriptions of magic are complemented by original illustrations from **Jetpack7**. Showing off magical items in action and bringing spells to vivid life, Wheeler describes their work as "phenomenal." "It's so exciting to write down an idea, send off a description and have Jetpack7 come back with something that is exactly what you imagined but also somehow better than you hoped for," he says. "Their work looks like classic D&D art but is engaging and appealing to kids. Although the *Young Adventurer's Guides* series also includes a lot of adult readers who say, 'I bought this because I like the artwork!'"

By focusing on the storytelling potential of magic, players of any age can avoid falling into the trap of relying on the same old tricks. *Wizards & Spells* is the perfect primer to help players think for themselves about how they might use magic more creatively, rather than becoming the warlock who tries to *eldritch blast* their way through anything or the bard whose plans might feature *disguise self* too heavily.



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“A lot of times people fall into the habit of ‘I’m going to *magic missile* everything’. We’re trying to get people thinking about imaginative and off the beaten path approaches they could take,” King says. “We’re not looking at magic purely as a combat tool or saying this spell does ‘x’ and that’s all it does. There are so many interesting things you can do with a lot of these spells, even if it’s as simple as directing your *magic missile* to knock a stalactite off the ceiling to block the path of the enemies chasing you.”

Wheeler neatly sums up the appeal of this book and the *Young Adventurer’s Guide* series as a whole: “They’re a really simple, engaging way to start getting involved in D&D. You can read the books and enjoy them for what they are, and you might be inspired to write your own story, draw your own pictures or play without ever knowing any of the rules. But this is also the beginning of something, where you can learn to create your own party and these guides can be the start of a lifetime of experience with Dungeons & Dragons.”

The D&D *Young Adventurer’s Guide: Wizards & Spells* is released by Penguin Random House on March 10, 2020 and has an MSRP of \$12.99. The previous D&D *Young Adventurer’s Guides* *Warriors & Weapons*, *Monsters & Creatures* and *Dungeons & Tombs* are

currently on sale.



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IN THE WORKS



Mythic Odysseys of Theros

Continue our tour of the hot new products coming soon to a tabletop near you...



Don't be surprised to see esteemed travel writer Volothamp Geddarm wrangling a backpack and sporting a "Theros or bust!" T-shirt. Having already walked the realm of Ravnica, he joins other Dungeons & Dragons fifth edition enthusiasts in prepping a trip to its newest location. Following in the footsteps of *Guildmasters' Guide to Ravnica*, *Mythic Odysseys of Theros* takes players to a setting made famous by *Magic: The Gathering*.

Theros is inspired by Greek mythology and is a place shaped by deities, where legends walk the lands. From the temples of omen-

speaking oracles to the five realms of the Underworld, the champions of the gods vie for immortal favor and a place among the world's living myths. Having worked as part of the Dungeons & Dragons Team for fourteen years before moving to the *Magic: The Gathering* Team a couple of years ago, James Wyatt was the perfect choice to help guide Theros' inclusion in fifth edition (along with Wes Schneider as co-lead and overseeing the book's completion, and Jeremy Crawford overseeing the final design of the book's game mechanics). Yet James's experience turning real-life myths into fantasy material appropriate for gaming tables began long before that.

“When I worked on the third edition **Deities & Demigods** book twenty years ago, I really embraced the challenge of shaping these historical pantheons to the fantasy world—by making the Greek goddess Tyche a halfling, for example. This is a great lesson in how to take historical mythology and translate it through that lens into a fantasy setting,” Wyatt explains.

“The process of world building for D&D and *Magic: The Gathering* is both similar and different. The *Magic* creative team builds an extensive guide for each world to give artists and writers enough detail to work with. Creating a D&D sourcebook for that same world means taking that and giving it a little more depth. In many ways, creating a world in *Magic* is like building an elaborate movie set where it's important to be able to look at a card and feel like there's a rich world behind it. Whereas in D&D, you need maps!”



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HISTORICAL INVESTIGATIONS

In order to accurately recreate the geography of Theros, Wyatt employed skills that would be recognized by historians all over the world. He spent a considerable amount of time researching the novella that was released alongside a previous set of Theros-based *Magic* cards to get a true feel for the setting.

“That was probably the biggest challenge, pulling together all the geographical information I could find in order to create a coherent map that would not be easily contradicted by the fiction. It’s difficult when there’s no satellite image of the landscape to look at. Because people in diaries and fiction don’t necessarily say, ‘We walked 350 miles northwest.’ Instead they’ll say, ‘Two weeks later, we arrived here.’ You then have to make certain estimates about travel time and terrain. It’s likely an army moves slower than individuals hurrying on horseback.”

Although much of the hard work of turning Greek myths into fantasy gameplay had already been carried out, Wyatt returned to the original stories to properly capture them from a D&D perspective. He wanted to depict Greek society as it would have been in those days and even the religious festivals he invented took their lead from the real world.

“I researched a number of things to flesh out the description of the

city states. For example, I read a lot about historical government structures in Athens,” Wyatt tells *Dragon+*. “I also researched the ancient Greek calendar, which was a lot of fun because it’s lunar. The calendar has twelve months most years but adds a thirteenth month to bring everything into alignment with the sun. They also named all of the months after holidays so we found ourselves inventing holidays as we went along. Most fantasy writers have a tendency to tie holidays to the sun, but if a sun god’s festival is held on the summer solstice that might appear in different months in different years.”

One of the new subclasses that will feature in the book (following [feedback on *Unearthed Arcana*](#)) is the College of Eloquence Bard, which also takes its lead from Greek society. “The College of Eloquence Bard is our way of trying to include the ideal of the silver-tongued orator,” he says, revealing that the Oath of Glory Paladin from the same *UA* release will also be featured, so that the deities [Purphoros](#), [Erebos](#), and [Athreos](#) offer good, playable options.



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DIVINE SMITE

Anyone who has played *Magic: The Gathering* using *Theros* card sets will have experienced the devotion mechanic, where gods become powerful creatures once you have enough of their colors in play. Wyatt and his team wanted to recreate that feel in *Mythic*

Odysseys of Theros.

“In *Guildmasters’ Guide to Ravnica* we took the system of renown from the *Dungeon Master’s Guide* and blew it up into a huge thing. Our *Theros* sourcebook does the same thing with the piety system from the *DMG* as a nice echo of the devotion mechanic in the *Theros* card sets,” he says. “That includes all sorts of rewards and restrictions for characters who choose to devote themselves to a god and track their piety.”

The gods also make themselves felt with new magic items. These include artifacts and weapons of the gods as seen on cards in the first *Magic: The Gathering Theros* block. The deities also play further roles in character creation, affecting a character from the moment of their birth. This includes bestowing supernatural gifts upon them, as well as supplying portentous omens that may tie into their fate.

“Everyone gets this extra leg up that is a gift of the gods, which is separate from the usual character background. It may be a magical thing about your nature, such as you have the mind of a sphinx and your thoughts can’t be read. Or you might be an oracle, which is an opportunity for your Dungeon Master to give you plenty of adventure hooks. It’s a straight power-up but not a huge power-up,” Wyatt reveals.

“I also might enjoy making tables a little bit too much! The book includes a table of omens with 100 entries on it. You can either roll a d100 to generate an omen at random or you can choose a god and roll either a d6 or d8 to get an omen specifically associated with them. We encourage players to roll on the table to generate an omen that was present at their birth.”

YOU’RE BARD

A new region also provides new races for a player to choose from. Theros’ world will be thick with minotaurs and centaurs (from *Guildmasters’ Guide to Ravnica*) and merfolk (using the tritons from *Volo’s Guide to Monsters*), alongside the satyr and leonin.

“The leonin is a different, stronger cat person, not just a tabaxi!” Wyatt says excitedly, “and the satyr is also brand new. Satyrs are pretty much as you would expect. They’re party animals with good Dexterity and Charisma, they have a headbutt attack, they’re fast,

they're fey, they resist magic and they have musical instrument proficiency and persuasion. I hope we're going to see a lot of satyr bards."

Wyatt's team has also mined the *Theros* card sets to find interesting creatures that belong in this setting. With many of the creatures in the *D&D Monster Manual* already owing their roots to Greek myth, that's a fairly long list. In some cases, it meant providing different lore about a D&D creature based on its roots in the new setting, in other cases it only took minor gameplay tweaks to distinguish the way a creature (such as a hydra) works in Theros.

ARTISTIC VISIONS

Similar to the *Ravnica* sourcebook, *Mythic Odysseys of Theros* also includes a short sample scenario in its chapter on starting an adventure. DMs looking to craft a wider campaign then have "zillions of tables" to help them generate their story ideas. This being D&D, there are also plenty of maps, including some that are linked with each god to serve up adventure sites no matter which deities the party focuses on.

"I love the work that Dyson Logos does in making these maps that you can just drop in and populate however you want. For me, that's the hardest part of coming up with an adventure so having a stockpile of maps is awesome," Wyatt shares. "For example, there's a temple of Athreos in two parts, split by the river that flows between the mortal world and the underworld. I've already used that in my home campaign in a completely different setting, as my characters boarded a ship to be ferried across the Astral Sea to the other side of the temple. It was amazing."

That same adjective could be used when describing the rich source of art Wyatt's team had access to. Drawing from four sets of *Magic: The Gathering* cards based in Theros gave them more than 1,200 potential pieces of art to choose from.

"It's such a gift to be able to work on something with such a huge pool of high-quality art as a starting point. This amazingly detailed art is only usually seen small on a card so getting to see it blown up or as a full-page illustration in a book is incredible," he says, revealing that the sourcebook will also include new art.

“We are creating a cover and an alternative cover, and both of those pieces of art feature a hero fighting a hydra. Each chapter within the book will also open with a new illustration.”

Will you clash with the gods of Theros in this campaign sourcebook for the world’s great roleplaying game? Will destiny and the schemes of immortals lead you to glory or the grave? And what tales will you leave behind, celebrated in the pantheon of myths, possibly written by a man wearing a “Theros or bust!” T-shirt?

Mythic Odysseys of Theros is released on June 2, 2020 with an MSRP of \$49.95 and is available to **preorder now**. Previous *Magic: The Gathering* fifth edition D&D sourcebook *Guildmasters’ Guide to Ravnica* are currently on sale.

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IN THE WORKS



Baldur's Gate III

Continue our tour of the hot new products coming soon to a tabletop near you...

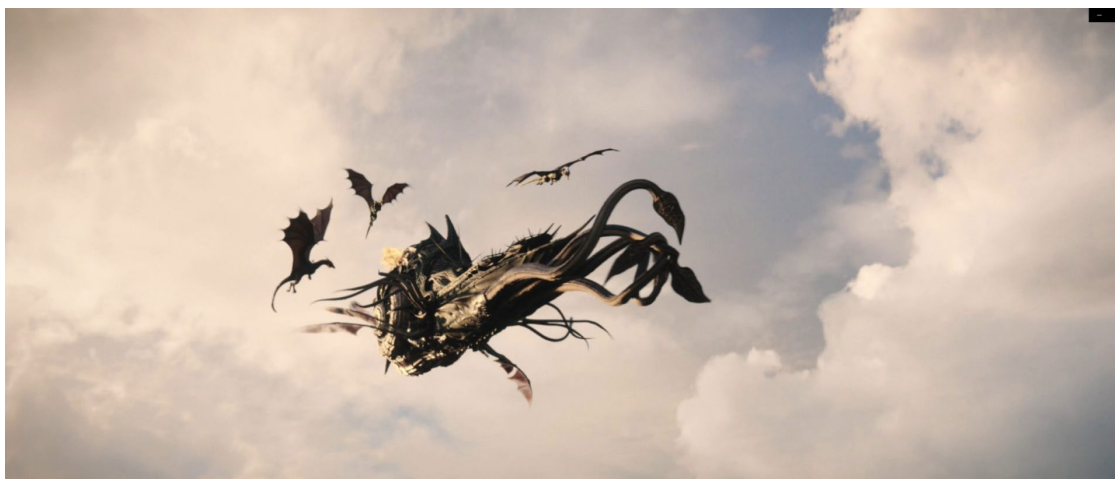


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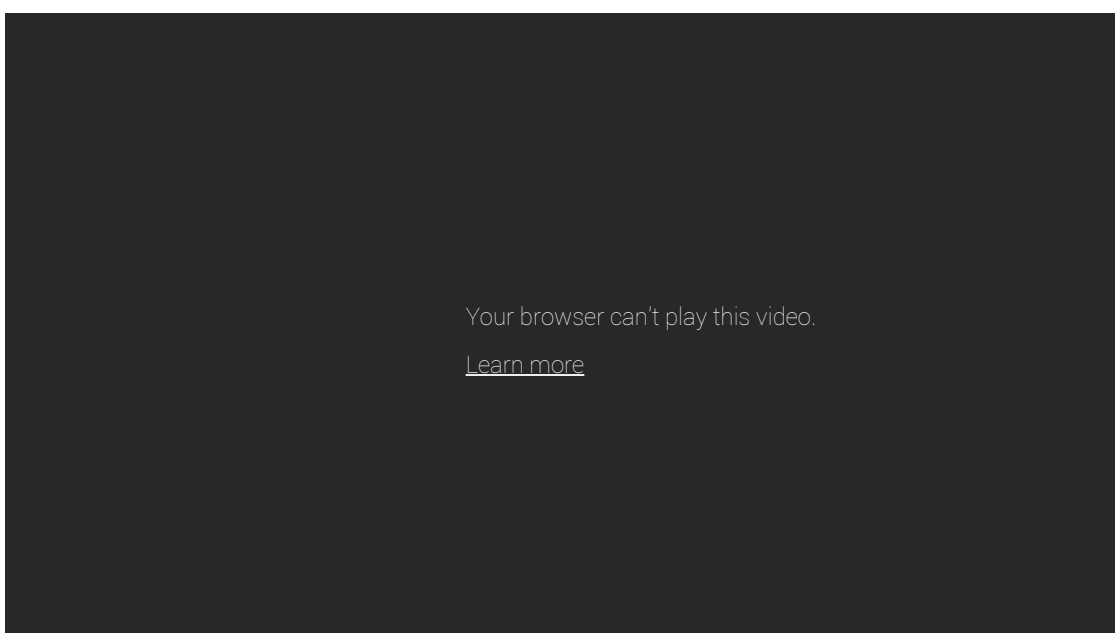
It's hard to miss our excitement this issue for the year 2020. We're as delighted with this double-crit of a century as we would be if we'd been rolling d20s with disadvantage and been rewarded with that incredible result. Another big "20" that's fast approaching is the anniversary of *Baldur's Gate II: Shadows of Amn*. Released in September 2000, we're especially pleased to know that *Baldur's Gate III* is scheduled to debut on Steam Early Access later this year in a fitting tribute to that occasion.

In *Baldur's Gate III*, Larian Studios (the team behind *Divinity: Original Sin*) places the fate of the Forgotten Realms in your hands,

as a malevolent presence intent on devouring its foes from the inside returns. Never let it be said that video games aren't educational. When the first trailer for *BGIII* aired in June 2019 many D&D players learned the term **ceremorphosis** for the first time, as they witnessed the violent birth of a mind flayer. Producer Larian has now shown off the cinematic introduction to the third *Baldur's Gate* video game, and it adds another fascinating piece of lore about the illithids. The word many players will be adding to their vocabularies to describe a mind flayer's enormous flying ship is nautiloid.

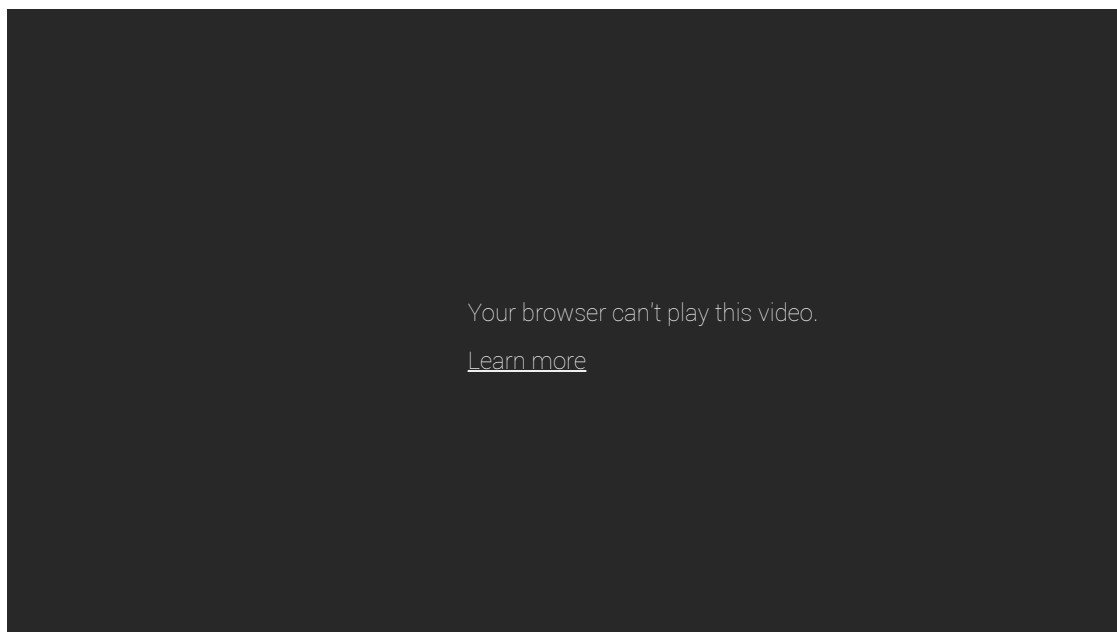


The action-packed movie that kicks off *Baldur's Gate III* sees the Sword Coast under attack from a deadly aerial assault. With dragon riders in pursuit, the tentacles of the mind flayer's nautiloid ship snatch citizens from their own streets. Worse is to come, as those taken are implanted with "tadpoles" designed to hollow out their host and create new illithids in their place.



“Sven Vincke came up with the story of the mind flayers and the tadpole on an airplane. A few of us were flying to talk to the D&D Team about the story, the lore, and how we were going to implement fifth edition into our game. We had all been reading lots of D&D books and Sven had seen the image of the tadpole crawling into an eye. He said, ‘What if mind flayers invade Faerûn again?’”
remembers Adam Smith, Senior Writer at Larian.

“But ceremorphosis is a quick process. On the first day your nails start dropping off and your hair starts falling out. We wondered if we could get away with putting players on such a short clock, because five days is not a long time in RPGs! To make it more fun, we decided that the tadpole in their heads is different.”



Having barely survived a crash-landing at the start of *Baldur's Gate III*, players find themselves stranded in the middle of an inhospitable wilderness. As far as they know, they only have a few days to get rid of the parasite before they sprout tentacles where there previously weren't any. As they desperately seek a cure, it becomes obvious that a psychic link with the tadpole gives them new powers and some other unexpected benefits (including improved physical capabilities such as being able to jump further, as well as unique abilities for each character—being able to walk in the sunlight in the case of vampire Astarion). As these dark powers awaken, should players resist and turn evil against itself? Or embrace the lure of the power devouring them from within and see how far it will take them?



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“The more you use your tadpole by selecting it from the options within dialogue, the stronger the influence of your tadpole becomes. But the more you use it, the quicker you unlock your powers,” says Larian Senior Designer Edouard Imbert.

“It’s that duality we’re introducing. It’s comparable to Bhaalspawn, which is a nice link to *Baldur’s Gate* and *Baldur’s Gate II*. We want players to be wary this thing is still inside them, and the fact that they can turn into a mind flayer is still there,” warns Smith.

To add to the chaos, a new cult known as the Absolute is on the rise. It quickly becomes clear that certain enemies you encounter within this faction also have tadpole powers, making them more interesting (and more dangerous!) opponents. Don’t be surprised when that priestess you’re facing off against suddenly uses telekinesis to drop one of the temple’s statues on you.



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FIFTH EDITION RULES

One of the most impressive elements of *Baldur's Gate III* is the way it takes D&D fifth edition tabletop rules and applies them to a video game environment. Players will recognize the ability to move, take an action, and use a bonus action—with an expanded list of options available for that bonus manoeuvre. Yet the translation goes beyond the nuts and bolts of the system to include the roleplay elements which help make D&D such a rich experience.

“You will recognize everything from D&D but sometimes an adjustment has been made. We extended certain things and streamlined others. It is fifth edition for sure, only slightly adapted for a video game,” Imbert says. “It’s still problem solving in a narrative context rather than being solely combat based, which is a great cocktail for enjoyment. There are fights you can sneak around, you can use your Charisma and convince people to let you through and so forth. If you’re extraordinarily lucky with your dice rolls you may not fight a single time!



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“We’re bringing that sense of immersion from the roleplaying tabletop experience. In our excitement to tell a story we’ve made sure our characters have names and personalities, even when they fight. One gnome may cry out if you kill the other gnome because that’s his brother!”

As faithful as the translation is, Imbert recognizes that not every element of such a massive roleplaying system could make the transition into the game.

“We had to limit a few spells because some don’t work as written in a video game. For example, *wish* is a very powerful spell it was difficult to translate. Or as a related example, as a druid you could choose to wild shape into any animal you’ve ever encountered, but realistically for our game we had to choose which those would be.”



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COMBAT READY

One area that has been carefully integrated is fifth edition combat. However, gamers who have ploughed hours into the original *Baldur's Gate* series of games should note that the combat style is changing from real-time with pause to a turn-based system. "We've proven with our *Divinity: Original Sin* RPG games that a turn-based system works and is a lot of fun, so I fully support the decision to swap," says Imbert.

Combat differs slightly from the tabletop rules with the expanded number of bonus actions available to choose from. The Larian team found it was more fun from a video game perspective if players had several potential actions available on their turn.



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“You can shove someone to trigger a Strength saving throw, pin them down with your arrow, then move away. That’s the kind of cool combo you want the players to be able to carry out. Turns are now team based, so it’s not the turn of your character, it’s the turn of your team. That allows you to switch between characters so you don’t have to wait for one to finish their turn before you can do everything with another,” says Imbert.

The ability to throw an item as a bonus action also led to a classic D&D moment during the live playthrough *Dragon+* was invited to. While running from two opponents, Vincke used his action and his movement, then wondered if he had something in his inventory he could hurl at his pursuers: “I’ll throw my boots at them,” he said, causing howls of laughter when they connected with the target and caused a few points of damage.

This being a video game world, certain combat options also needed to be smoothed out during playtesting. Goblins, it turned out, were an especially nasty creature to come up against because of their built-in mobility during battle.

“Goblins have Nimble Escape, which allows them to ignore an attack of opportunity. I was very eager to implement that in *Baldur’s Gate III*, but we quickly realized that it was a real pain for the players. I decided to change it so that only goblin rangers have Nimble Escape but goblin melee opponents don’t,” Imbert says.



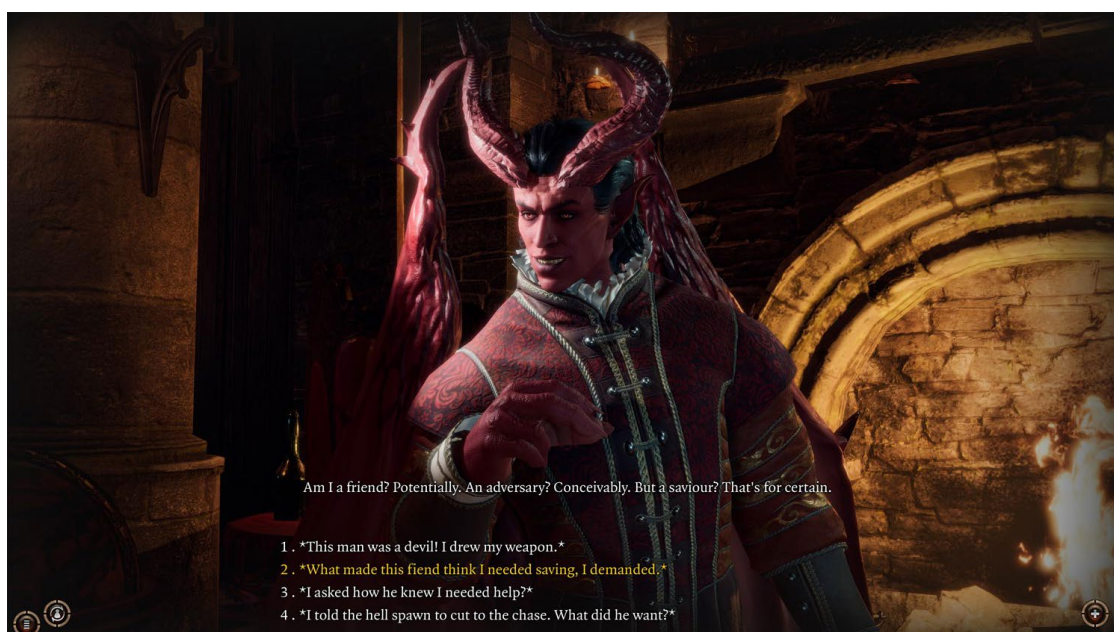
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ENVIRONMENTAL DISASTERS

Another element of D&D that has been cleverly integrated into the game is the ability to use your environment. Taking an elevated position at least 2.3 meters above a creature will give your character advantage on their attack role. As with *Divinity: Original Sin II*, there's also the potential to use surfaces to aid you in combat, drenching them in grease to slow your enemies before setting them alight to injure them. You might also dip your sword or arrow into fire to do additional damage or spread those flames even further.

“If you walk right into a major fight in *Baldur's Gate III*, it's going to be hard. I'm not talking about those popcorn moments where you kill three goblins and feel good about yourself, I mean the more difficult encounters. The elevation of areas in a level, alongside sneaking and hiding in the shadows, is a tool we've given the players to prepare for an encounter. To fight the strongest opponents, you're sometimes going to have to use that level design,” Imbert suggests.

“For the first time ever in a game we have destructible platforms. You could shoot the bridge and have someone fall to their death in the chasm below. It's an insta-kill, which is good if they're a major enemy. But you'll also lose all the gear they had on them.”



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TIME WAITS FOR NO MINSC

The question every fan of the *Baldur's Gate* series will be asking themselves is: will we see a few familiar faces from past games? "Fans of *Baldur's Gate* and *Baldur's Gate II* are going to look at our game and have certain expectations. Some of those expectations we're going to completely shatter. We're set 100 years after *Baldur's Gate II* and we are taking everything in the Forgotten Realms D&D books as canon," Smith says, the earlier playtest confirming that Volo is in the game. "We don't want to take away the expectation that they might meet this or that character again. But we're not going to change timelines or do anything crazy to introduce anyone, we're using the lore very respectfully."

"Making *Baldur's Gate III* is a dream come true. If you talk to people who make RPGs for a living, they have either come from a D&D background or have played six or more D&D RPG video games. This is such a huge deal for us that a lot of us fell off our chairs when we realized we would be working on it. It's a big challenge but we are so confident in our team and our technology that we know we can pull this off," Smith says.

Baldur's Gate III will be available on [Steam Early Access](#) later in 2020. Gather your party and subscribe for *Baldur's Gate III* updates at the [official website](#).



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IN THE WORKS



Forgotten Realms Laeral Silverhand Explorer's Kit

Continue our tour of the hot new products coming soon to a tabletop near you...

Matt Chapman & Bart Carroll



There won't be a high DC on your History check to recognize the name Laeral Silverhand. The Open Lord of Waterdeep is a notable figure in that city, and parties who have tackled adventures such as *Waterdeep: Dragon Heist* and *Waterdeep: Dungeon of the Mad Mage* will be quite familiar with her.

This set is aptly named *Laeral Silverhand's Explorer's Kit*, as she herself takes the lead in guiding players on their path to adventure. Twenty illustrated, double-sided cards capture her expert insights on key characters, locations, and lore from across the Forgotten Realms.

“Laeral Silverhand has her own identity and is a very strong character,” says Product Marketing Specialist Chris Lindsay. “All of the information is presented in her voice as she walks you through the Sword Coast and its most prominent people and places. Given that she is one of the Seven Sisters, and those Seven Sisters are all several hundred years old or more at this point, she knows a thing or two.”

COLORFUL CAST

The Open Lord isn't the only Waterdeep resident you'll learn more about in *Forgotten Realms Laeral Silverhand's Explorer's Kit*. Cards within the set include lore from her perspective on Yawning Portal owner and proprietor Durnan, moneylender Mirt, the Mad Mage of Undermountain Halaster Blackcloak, the current Blackstaff of Waterdeep Vajra Safahr, the Xanathar, Jarlaxle Baenre, Drizzt Do'Urden, and Grand Duke Ulder Ravengard.

“We wanted to highlight more characters for fans and strengthen their presence and their personas. For example, Grand Duke Ulder Ravengard began his career as the leader of the Flaming Fist mercenary company policing the lower city of Waterdeep and the outlying areas of Baldur's Gate. He rose to prominence in the *Murder in Baldur's Gate* scenario when fifth edition Dungeons & Dragons was officially launched,” Lindsay recalls.

“Players have most recently encountered him in *Baldur's Gate: Descent Into Avernus*. He happens to be there when Elturel is pulled into Avernus and he leads the charge in defending the city as the heroes search for a solution to return it to Faerûn. When he's not there to strong-arm the Flaming Fist to do things the right way, its members often revert back to being thugs.”



MAPPED OUT

No explorer's kit worth its salt would be complete without a map. *Forgotten Realms Laeral Silverhand's Explorer's Kit* includes two—its foldout map of the city of Waterdeep includes a rendering of the Sword Coast on the other side.

“If you start at Baldur's Gate and head north along that coastline, eventually you're going to hit Icewind Dale,” says Lindsay. “The lore cards included alongside the map reveal more about the prominent locations on the Sword Coast, highlighting Baldur's Gate, Waterdeep, Neverwinter, Luskan, and Icewind Dale.”

LAERAL SILVERHAND

If you're not a Waterdhavian yourself and are new to the area, this centuries-old archmage is one of the seven daughters of Mystra, goddess of magic. Although it's hinted that her power has somewhat diminished over time, she remains a potent figure and formidable wizard. As with any spellcaster wearing a *robe of the archmagi* and with *time stop* on their spell list, she should be

treated with all due care! The stats for this former student of Elminster appear in *Waterdeep: Dragon Heist* and are available to peruse below.

[DOWNLOAD THE PDF](#)

The box also contains dice to help players roll up a character and then play the game once their quest begins. There are eleven dice in total: two d20s (for rolling with advantage and disadvantage), one d12, two d10s (to calculate percentile results), one d8, four d6s (for rolling character stats), and one d4. All of those sit within a durable, felt-lined box that functions as two dice trays.

“Once you have that dice tray all of a sudden you don’t have to worry about fishing a d20 from under a sofa or a table so much,” Lindsay advises. “The trays are also a fantastic way to corral all your dice during the game, when everyone sitting at the table has a mound of dice in front of them.”

Forgotten Realms Laeral Silverhand’s Explorer’s Kit releases on March 17, 2020 with an MSRP of \$24.95 and can be [purchased online](#) or at your [friendly local gaming store](#).

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LAERAL SILVERHAND

Anamanué Laeral Silverhand was born in the Year of the Cowl (765 DR), the fifth of seven daughters of the goddess Mystra. Each of the Seven Sisters is a powerful and ageless beauty with a penchant for arcane magic.

Long ago, Laeral ruled a kingdom called Stornanter and held the title of Witch-Queen of the North. After that, she led a band of adventurers called the Nine. She met and married Khelben Arunsun, who would later become the Blackstaff, the Lord Mage of Waterdeep. After Khelben died, Laeral retired from public life. She resurfaced after the Spellplague and the Sundering, weakened by Mystra's death, rebirth, and withdrawal from the world.

Laeral's magic isn't as great as it once was, though she does her utmost to hide this fact. Only Elminster, her trusted friend and advisor, knows the extent of her decline. Despite her diminished abilities, Laeral remains a

formidable, clear-headed wizard with plenty of magic at her disposal.

A few years ago, Dagult Neverember was ousted as Open Lord of Waterdeep. Laeral reluctantly stepped into the vacancy at the request of the Masked Lords, and has served as Waterdeep's Open Lord ever since. Initially overwhelmed by the demands of the nobles and guildmasters, she has settled nicely into her new role. She uses her magic sparingly and relies on trusted advisors and deputies. As time allows, she likes to venture outside the Palace of Waterdeep in disguise, just to clear her head or check up on old friends (and enemies).

Laeral's relationship with Vajra Safahr, the current Blackstaff, has its challenges. For one thing, Laeral is much older, much wiser, and much more powerful than Vajra, whom she views as an insecure child. In addition, Vajra wields the *Blackstaff*, which has Khelben Arunsun's soul and the souls of all the other Blackstaffs bound inside it. Laeral covets the staff, because it con-

LAERAL SILVERHAND

Medium humanoid (human), chaotic good

Armor Class 18 (*robe of the archmagi*)

Hit Points 228 (24d8 + 120)

Speed 30 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 13 (+1) | 17 (+3) | 20 (+5) | 20 (+5) | 20 (+5) | 19 (+4) |

Saving Throws Int +11, Wis +11

Skills Arcana +17, History +17, Insight +11, Perception +11, Persuasion +10

Damage Resistances fire

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses truesight 60 ft., passive Perception 21

Languages Common, Draconic, Dwarvish, Elvish, Giant, Infernal

Challenge 17 (18,000 XP)

Special Equipment. Laeral wears a white *robe of the archmagi* (accounted for in her statistics). She wields a *flame tongue* longsword.

Magic Resistance. While wearing her *robe of the archmagi*, Laeral has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Spellcasting. Laeral is a 19th-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 21, +13 to hit with spell attacks). Laeral has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *light*, *mage hand*, *minor illusion*, *prestidigitation*, *ray of frost*

1st level (at will): *detect magic*, *disguise self*, *magic missile*, *shield*

2nd level (at will): *detect thoughts*, *invisibility*, *misty step*

3rd level (3 slots): *counterspell*, *fly*, *sending*, *tongues*

4th level (3 slots): *banishment*, *greater invisibility*, *Otiluke's resilient sphere*

5th level (3 slots): *cone of cold*, *geas*, *Rary's telepathic bond*

6th level (2 slots): *globe of invulnerability*, *mass suggestion*

7th level (1 slot): *prismatic spray*, *teleport*

8th level (1 slot): *feeblemind*, *power word stun*

9th level (1 slot): *time stop*

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Laeral makes three attacks with her silver hair and *flame tongue*, in any combination. She can cast one of her cantrips or 1st-level spells before or after making these attacks.

Silver Hair. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +11 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (2d6) force damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 19 Constitution saving throw or be paralyzed for 1 minute. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Flame Tongue. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d8 + 1) slashing damage plus 7 (2d6) fire damage, or 6 (1d10 + 1) slashing damage plus 7 (2d6) fire damage when used with two hands.

Spellfire (Recharges after a Long Rest). Magical, heatless, silver fire harmlessly erupts from Laeral and surrounds her until she is incapacitated or until she uses an action to quench it. She gains one of the following benefits of her choice, which lasts until the silver fire ends:

- She can breathe underwater.
- She can survive without food and water.
- She is immune to magic that would ascertain her thoughts, truthfulness, alignment, or creature type.
- She gains resistance to cold damage, and she is unharmed by temperatures as low as -50 degrees Fahrenheit.

While the silver fire is present, she has the following additional action options:

- Cast the *cure wounds* spell. The target regains 1d8 + 5 hit points. After Laeral takes this action, roll a d6. On a roll of 1, the silver fire disappears.
- Cast the *revivify* spell without material components. After Laeral takes this action, roll a d6. On a roll of 1–2, the silver fire disappears.
- Release a 60-foot line of silver fire that is 5 feet wide or a 30-foot cone of silver fire. Objects in the area that aren't being worn or carried take 26 (4d12) fire damage. Each creature in the area must succeed on a DC 21 Dexterity saving throw, taking 26 (4d12) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. After Laeral takes this action, roll a d6. On a roll of 1–3, the silver fire disappears.

LAERAL SILVERHAND



tains all that's left of her husband. Not surprisingly, the two mages avoid each other as much as possible.

In times of great need, Laeral can command Vajra to unleash Force Grey. Until that order is given, Force Grey isn't allowed to conduct operations in Waterdeep, though Laeral's spies tell her that Vajra has secretly activated members of the elite order and sent them on a number of unauthorized missions. Laeral is reluctant to confront Vajra on the matter, and rationalizes her inaction by framing it as a test of Vajra's competence.

IN THE WORKS



Dice Masters

Continue our tour of the hot new products coming soon to a tabletop near you...

Matt Chapman & Bart Carroll

Something is afoot in Waterdeep. Barman and spinner of tales Durnan is locked in conversation with renowned explorer Volothamp Geddarm and *Force Grey*'s Brawlwin Chainminer. Zhentarim half-orc assassin Ziraj seems tensed in preparation. And many eyes in the shadows watch an elaborate glass bowl, waiting to pounce should anyone dare harm the beautiful goldfish within it. Alliances will be forged, threats will be blocked, and fish *will* be avenged as WizKids' D&D *Dice Masters* returns to Faerûn once more.

This dice building game pits players against each other as they gather resources and party members, set traps and make use of iconic locations in the City of Splendors. It's a rich resource to pull from. "There are almost too many good options in Waterdeep!" says James O'Brien, Product Manager at WizKids, as he discusses the three new sets: *Trouble in Waterdeep Campaign Box*; *Adventures in Waterdeep Team Pack*; and *The Zhentarim Team Pack*.



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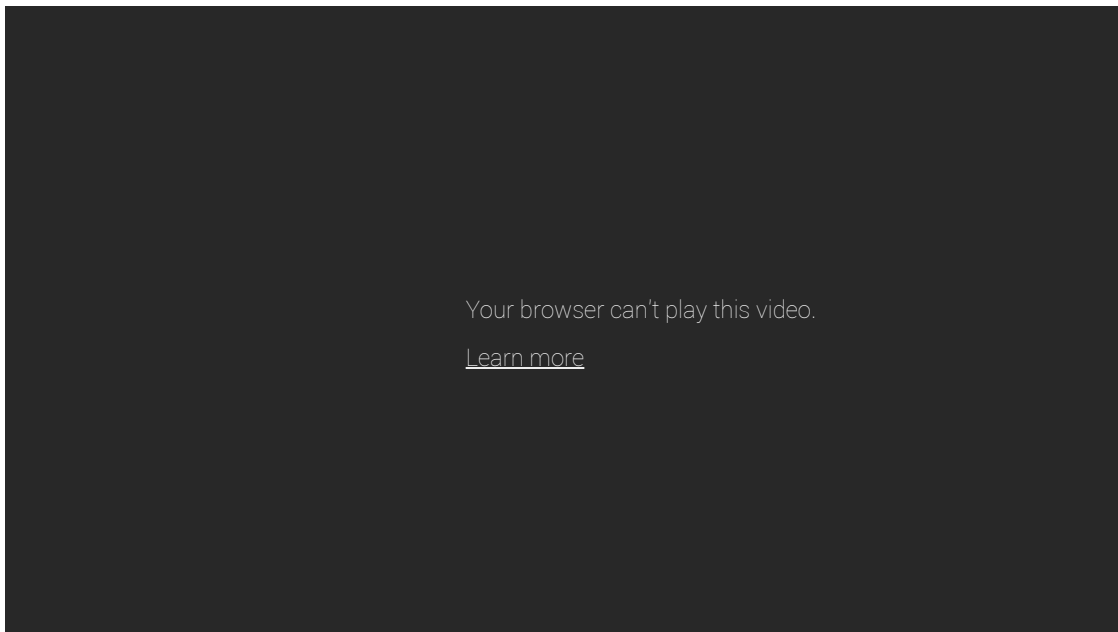
HOW TO PLAY

In Dungeons & Dragons *Dice Masters*, players take on the role of warlords directing the actions of a party of powerful servants (represented by dice) to battle each other. Gameplay centers on drawing dice from a bag, rolling them, then choosing your actions depending on what you rolled.



Each die is engineered with a unique combination of colors and graphics. Initially you'll begin with eight white NPC character dice in your bag, which have six possible results when rolled: four different

energy types to spend on resources; one side which represents any kind of energy; and a ‘pawn’ creature with one attack power and one defense that can be put into play for free.



Each turn you’ll roll your dice to determine which of these resources you have available. Further dice can be purchased in the form of creatures, spells, or basic actions using energy from those rolls. Those new dice are added to your team and come into play once they are drawn randomly from the bag. You can send your party members into the field to strike at the enemy warlord or block attacks against you. When you reduce the opposing warlord’s life to zero, you win!

“*Trouble in Waterdeep* is a tightly themed *Campaign Box* that allows new players to get started, while offering existing players new cards and dice to add to their collection,” O’Brien says. “In particular it includes a lot of fun team-builds for players to use head-to-head or against other Dice Masters teams. Meanwhile, the *Adventures in Waterdeep Team Pack* features not-to-be-missed characters such as Durnan, Jarlaxle, the Black Viper, and Vajra. On top of that, the *Zhentarim Team Pack* includes some of the coolest mercenary characters, such as Istrid Horn and Ziraj.”



DICE BUILDING

“If you start out with the *Campaign Box* and love the heroes, you’ll want to get the *Adventures in Waterdeep Team Pack* to add some extra options,” O’Brien suggests. “For some players that will mean the chance to play new characters, while for others it’s about creating efficient combos—for example, Brawlwin and Durnan are excellent allies in a Volo-based team.



“Volo: Travelling Scholar is going to be a powerhouse for casual players. It’s as if Volo goes from being a nearly powerless guy to this huge beatstick by hearing tales from his fellow adventurers, and adding Experience tokens that buff his attack and defense. It fits D&D so well because even though the monsters are a big threat initially, eventually your party accumulates powers and skills to overcome them. “Monsters still have an effective answer to beefy Volos though. If your opponent goes too heavy on the Adventurers strategy, Aurinax: Dragon of Waterdeep can make it impossible for them to block your incoming damage! We really love the team building aspect of *Dice Masters*, but this *Campaign Box* gives players the chance to let their tactics shine as they grow into experts.”

Players who survived *Dice Masters: Tomb of Annihilation* will be well aware that the system also contains traps. It seems Waterdeep is not without its own similar pitfalls.

“Since D&D *Dice Masters* laid the foundation for traps in the *Tomb of Annihilation* set, we had some fun groundwork for how dice such as The God Catcher and The Great Drunkard would play. And since Action dice are important to so many characters, we also wanted to make sure we included flavorful options such as the Yawning Portal

tavern and the Stone of Golorr.”



PICTURE PERFECT

Another feature of *Dice Masters* is the image on each die. This takes the spells, creatures and other gear that make up your party and boils them down into mini works of art. It’s important that these logos clearly depict the element they represent so there’s no confusion for players, making each one unique.

“Sometimes—such as with Sylgar’s fish-body—the icons are literal; and then with Joppa, for example, we used the monk class icon,” O’Brien explains. “Other characters have been depicted using a weapon, a head, or even a full-body pose. It’s neat that there’s so much diversity in quickly answering, ‘Who?’

“While it’s fun to see the icon for any single character take shape, it’s even more exciting to see the portrait of an entire set’s icons come

together. It's also interesting to see how the size constraint of these small dice can breed creativity. First drafts of icons don't always capture the subject as intended but once everyone sees the right answer it's tough to imagine anything else."

WizKids D&D *Dice Masters Trouble in Waterdeep Campaign Box* (**MSRP \$39.99**), *Adventures in Waterdeep Team Pack* (**MSRP \$12.99**), and *The Zhentarim Team Pack* (**MSRP \$12.99**) are available now. Visit the [*Dice Masters website*](#) for more information.

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IN THE WORKS

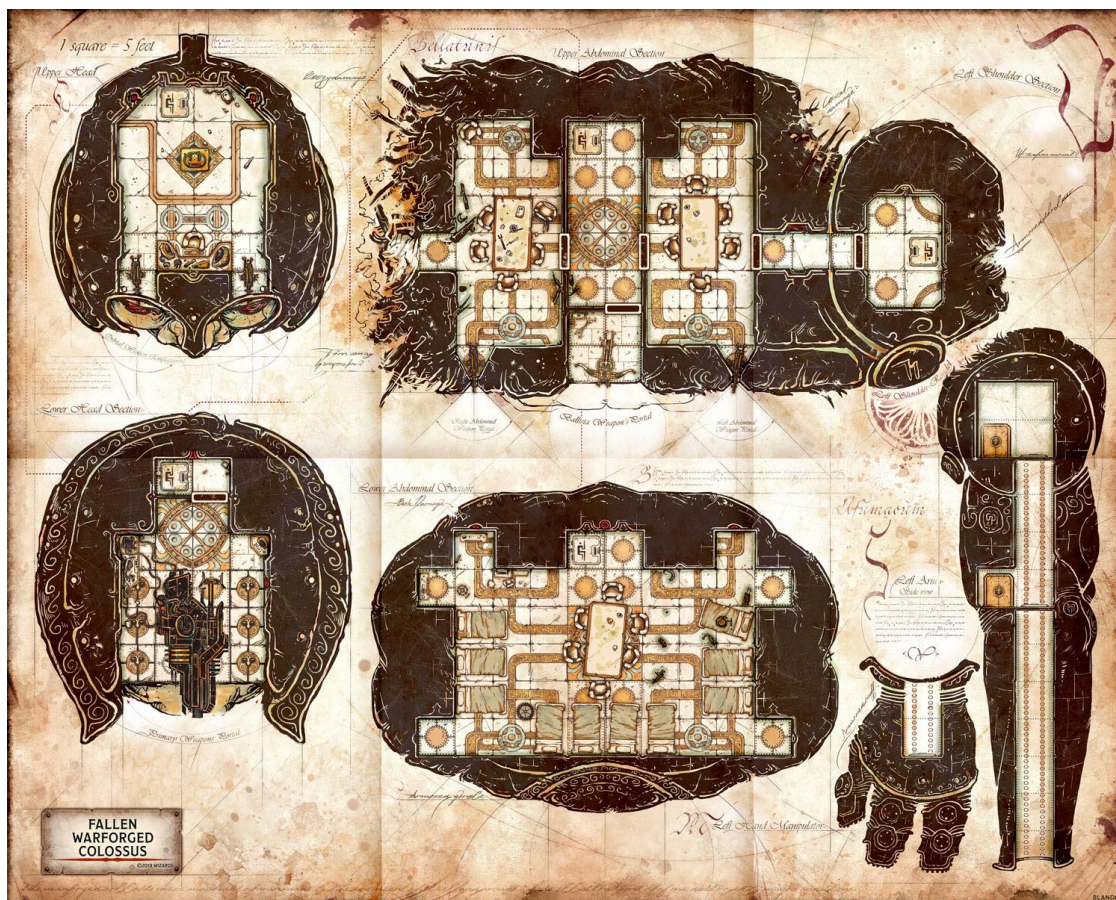


Beadle & Grimm's Gold Edition Of Eberron: Rising From The Last War

Continue our tour of the hot new products
coming soon to a tabletop near you...

Matt Chapman & Bart Carroll

“A big goal for us in 2020 is to be able to provide every level of gamer with something for their table. That’s what we’re building towards,” says Matthew Lillard, co-founder of Beadle & Grimm’s Pandemonium Warehouse. “The baseline for us is still, what are the things that excite us as gamers?”



(Select to view)

Beadle & Grimm’s premium Dungeons & Dragons releases have arrived in a number of flavors so far. *Waterdeep: Dragon Heist* and *Baldur’s Gate: Descent Into Avernus* have both been released as Platinum Editions, while *Ghosts of Saltmarsh* arrived as a “Sinister” Silver Edition. So what defines a Gold Edition and what goodies can we expect alongside the material from the *Eberron: Rising From The Last War* sourcebook?

“The Silver Edition is the baseline in terms of the pricing and the quality we want to deliver. Silver includes cool battle maps, items, and handouts so we’re still able to deliver a lot for that,” explains co-founder Charlie Rehor. “For the Gold Edition we double down on the items people are asking for. For example, at that higher price point we’re able to include larger maps printed on a different material.

“In terms of the Platinum Edition, we include all the things you need to run a game plus something bonkers—whether that’s an infernal war machine or a plushie hollyphant!”



Illustration: Wayne Reynolds

WARFORGED TITAN
Huge construct, lawful neutral

Warforged titans are hulking constructs built to wreak paths of destruction through enemy armies. Some of the most feared combatants of the Last War, warforged titans are barely sentient, with just enough intelligence to follow commands.

Legacy of Giants. In the Age of Giants, giant artificers built mindless war golems to aid them in their war against the quori. Millennia later, some of these golems were unearthed by adventurers searching for the secrets of that age, then turned over to artificers working for the dragonmarked houses during the Last War. House Cannith studied these designs, and in the course of uncovering the secrets of the golems and the giant artificers who made them, House Cannith created the first warforged titans.

WARFORGED TITAN
Huge construct, lawful neutral

Armor Class 20 (natural armor)
Hit Points 125 (10d12 + 60)
Speed 40 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|--------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| 23 (+6) | 8 (-1) | 22 (+6) | 3 (-4) | 11 (+0) | 1 (-5) |

Damage Immunities poison, psychic
Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned
Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10
Languages understands the languages of its creator but can't speak
Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Platforms. The warforged titan has two platforms built into its chassis. One Medium or smaller creature can ride on each platform without squeezing. To make a melee attack against a target within 5 feet of the warforged, they must use spears or weapons with reach and the target must be Large or larger.

Siege Monster. The warforged titan deals double damage to objects and structures.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The warforged titan makes one axehand attack and one hammerfist attack.

Axehand. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 19 (3d8 + 6) slashing damage, plus 11 (2d10) slashing damage if the target is prone.

Hammerfist. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 19 (3d8 + 6) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 17 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

Sweeping Axe (Recharge 6). The warforged titan makes a sweep with its axehand, and each creature within 10 feet of it must make a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw. A creature takes 19 (3d8 + 6) slashing damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

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BEADLE & GRIMM

(Select to view)

ARTISTIC ENCOUNTERS

One of the most popular additions in Beadle & Grimm’s boxed sets are the encounter cards. DMs are able to show those to the players and let them see what they’re facing off against, rather than flashing them a page in the book and then having to hide it away so players don’t get a handle on its stats and abilities.

“People love those. And the book is full of such great art it’s a blast for DMs to be able to hand it to the players,” Rehor confirms. “We then commission additional pieces from those same artists. As well as a new DM screen featuring art by **Titus Lunter** and **Suzanne Helmigh**, we’ve included art for the four short bonus encounters in the box and we’ve also blown up the map of Khorvaire and added annotations to it by a gnome cartographer.”

That’s not the only map included in the Gold Edition. The clifftop city of Sharn—also known as The City of Towers—is Khorvaire’s largest metropolis, making it a popular destination for any Eberron campaign. The Beadle & Grimm team got to create a new



(Select to view)

version of the Sharn city map to provide as a larger hand out for the DM. “Being able to work on a map of Sharn with the artist Lee Moyer and author Keith Baker was crazy!” Rehor admits.

Every B&G premium boxed set also includes a bonus player character and Rehor wanted to dig down into Eberron lore when creating that. “The Eberron setting contains a lot of new, unique stuff. We wanted to be able to ease those people into it who haven’t played in that world before. For our bonus PC we used the changeling race and created an artificer. That easily explains what an artificer can look like and what it can do, what’s a good background for that kind of character and how you’d build one,” he tells *Dragon+*.

“Another of the new elements introduced in Eberron is the idea that parties can have patrons, whether that’s a university or the Dark Lanterns. We thought it would be nice for the players to have a contract from that patron, so we took some artistic license and created four of those. We also created a deck of magic item cards because there’s a lot of interesting new magic in Eberron.”

“Another fun item from the Eberron source book is its newspaper articles. We have recreated those as broadsheets that can be handed to the players and we have extended that material by adding a couple of our own.”

IMMERSIVE ITEMS

“When we’re looking at what elements we can create to elevate your game, we keep coming back to the idea of what we think is cool,” Lillard says with a smile. “When we told the D&D Team what we

wanted to include in the box they came back and said, ‘You guys do the coolest stuff!’ It’s nice when you’re impressing people who do this for a living.”

Lillard wanted the Gold Edition boxed set to include elements that have never existed outside of the Eberron books before. That tactic inspired a number of physical pieces for DMs to include in their game.

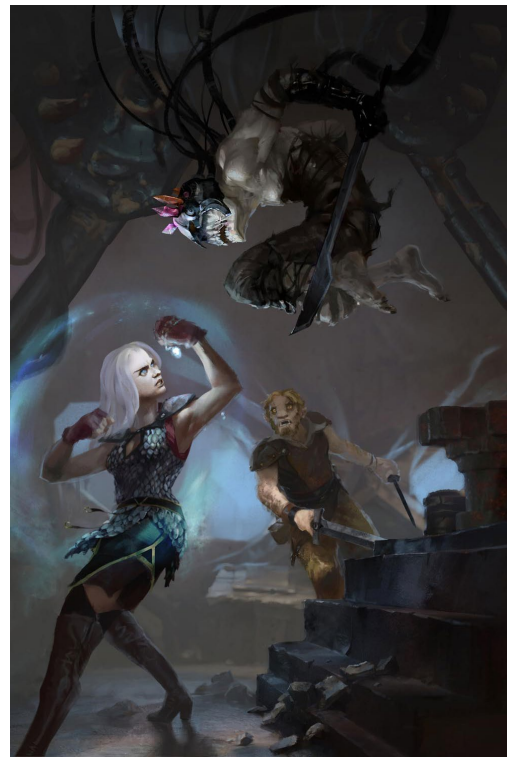
“*Dragonshards* are an element of magic in the world of Eberron—they’re these little rock-sized shards of magic. We’ve made three of those based on images from the book, using super-vibrant colors in a polyurethane sculpt. There’s a clouded effect to them to make them look organic and of the earth, like something you would mine. We then drilled a hole in them and put them on a leather strap. Not only is it a prop for the game, it’s a piece you can wear.”

That jewelry isn’t the only wearable item included in the box. A series of tokens includes one for *feather fall*, which can be pinned to a player to represent their slow descent. Depending on their lineage, characters might also have a dragonmark on their body and Beadle & Grimm have included a fun way for players to show that off.

“This was an opportunity for us to do something we’ve never done before. Since dragonmarks are a feature in this world we included a set of temporary tattoos with a foil effect. These will look great if you’re playing at home or if you’re cosplaying your character at a convention,” Lillard says.

Whether they’re wearing dragonshards and sporting tattoos or flicking through broadsheets after scouring their contracts, players will be immersed in the world of Eberron. If it’s their first visit to this locale that will help them become accustomed to its unusual characteristics, and also pick up on the overall vibe of its world.

“We felt it might be the first time



(Select to view)

many players had visited Eberron so anything we can do to familiarize them with the world as quickly as possible is useful. Not only have certain things been turned on their head—you could run into a lawful good red dragon and that would be totally normal in Eberron—but it sets up an investigative, noir style of gameplay and we wanted to move people in that direction.”

Beadle & Grimm’s Gold Edition of *Eberron: Rising from the Last War* is shipping now with an MSRP of \$249.99 and can **be ordered online**.

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THE RACE OF EIGHT WINDS

UPPER DURA



HIPPOGRIFF
DAGGERWATCH AND
OVERLOOK



PEGASUS
HIGHWATER

MIDDLE DURA



EAGLE
BROKEN ARCH AND



OWL
RATTLESTONE AND
THE BAZAAR



HAWK
TUMBLEDOWN AND
UNDERBLOW

LOWER DURA



GRIFFON
PRECARIOUS AND

HOUSE SIVIS PRESENTS THIS CUT-AWAY MAP REVEALING THE TIERED DISTRICTS AND DYNAMIC CONTOURS OF

SHARN • CITY OF TOWERS

SKYWAY

UPPER DURA

UPPER TAVICK'S LANDING

MIDDLE DURA

MIDDLE TAVICK'S LANDING

DAGGER
RIVER

CITY OF THE DEAD

NORTHEDGE

CENTRAL PLATEAU



THE
DRAGONMARKED
HOUSES



CANNITH



DENEITH
HOUSE OF SENTINEL



GHALLANDA
HOUSE OF HOSPITALITY



JORASCO
HOUSE OF HEALING



KUNDARAK
House of Warring.



LYRANDAR
HOUSE OF STORMS



MEDANI



ORIEN
MAISON DE PASSAGE



IN THE WORKS



Dungeon Mayhem Monster Madness

Continue our tour of the hot new products coming soon to a tabletop near you...



(Select to view)

Roscoe Wetlaufer and Jordan Comar's D&D card game *Dungeon Mayhem* is packed with personality. The aim may be for players to go at each other like tarrasques in a potions emporium, but its cast of zany characters and easy-to-learn rules make it a kid-friendly game. That cartoony style is all thanks to the artists who have worked on the base game and its two expansions.

"The art has always made *Dungeon Mayhem* special and it's incredible again here in the *Monster Madness* expansion," Wetlaufer says. "We want it to have that immediate pick up and play feel that's inviting for families and that art does a ton of the heavy lifting for us."

Our artists have always hit a defined look, while still being playful and giving the characters a huge amount of energy and personality.”

Dungeon Mayhem: Monster Madness adds six new characters, giving players six new decks to explore. They include red dragon Lord Cinderpuff, owlbear Hoots McGoots, mimic Mimi LeChaise, mind flayer Dr. Tentaculous, beholder Delilah Deathray, and gelatinous cube Blorp. Artist Cam Kendell’s previous work singled him out as the ideal candidate to take the reigns to bring these incredible creatures to life.

“Most of my work so far has been whimsical in nature or rooted in fantasy so *Dungeon Mayhem* was a perfect fit. And I was familiar with all of the creatures in this expansion, but the one I was most excited about was the gelatinous cube. It’s a really interesting creature because it’s so simple and unassuming yet so devious and wonderful at the same time,” Kendell tells *Dragon+*.

“I had previously created a comic which featured a gelatinous cube. Its main character was a ghost who solved mysteries and Gerry L. McCube was a side character. Things happened to Gerry that he didn’t expect. Gerald Latinous McCube—to give him his full name—inspired a lot of the design of the cube in *Dungeon Mayhem*.”



TINY TARRASQUE

“There were a lot of other monsters which almost made it into the mix and a ton of options were left on the cutting room floor. Some of those were really fun but a little too obscure,” *Dungeon Mayhem* co-creator Roscoe Wetlaufer reveals, before tantalizing us further with this gem. “We even talked about having a tiny tarrasque!”

If you’re having trouble picturing what that adorable but ultimately terrifying toddler might have looked like, here’s artist Cam Kendell’s take on it exclusively for *Dragon+*.

Kendell says there was a core element that made each character unique in the *Monster Madness* expansion, and even their names were designed to bring out their charm: “I think the names do a lot to add to the personality—Hoots McGoots is a great name! I also liked

the idea that the owlbear is a circus creature which is both cute and dangerous. I tried to ensure that was clearly reflected. And I loved the idea of a mind flayer being a psychiatrist that's burning your mind."



There might be six new decks and six new monsters to play with but there's another unsung character we know you're going to love. Gelatinous cube Blorp is often pictured with a gnome playmate who is the long-suffering recipient of acid burps and full cube immersion.



“The main character is the cube, but he has this poor gnome inside him on most of the cards,” Kendell confirms. “They’re almost like a team in a way. One of my favorite cards is the one where the gnome is hopping up out of the cube and adding to its arsenal, so the gnome is firing his slingshot while the cube has these big sword and battle axe-like arms. They’re like a symbiotic relationship.”

Asking Kendell to pick one card he loves above all others leaves us with another duo battling it out: “It’s a never-ending battle between Hoots’ knife-wielding sock puppet and Delilah’s Fashion Police Ogre with short-shorts, high socks, and official ‘Fashin Popo’ badge.”

Dungeon Mayhem: Monster Madness is available now alongside the *Dungeon Mayhem* core set and its first expansion *Dungeon Mayhem: Battle for Baldur’s Gate*.



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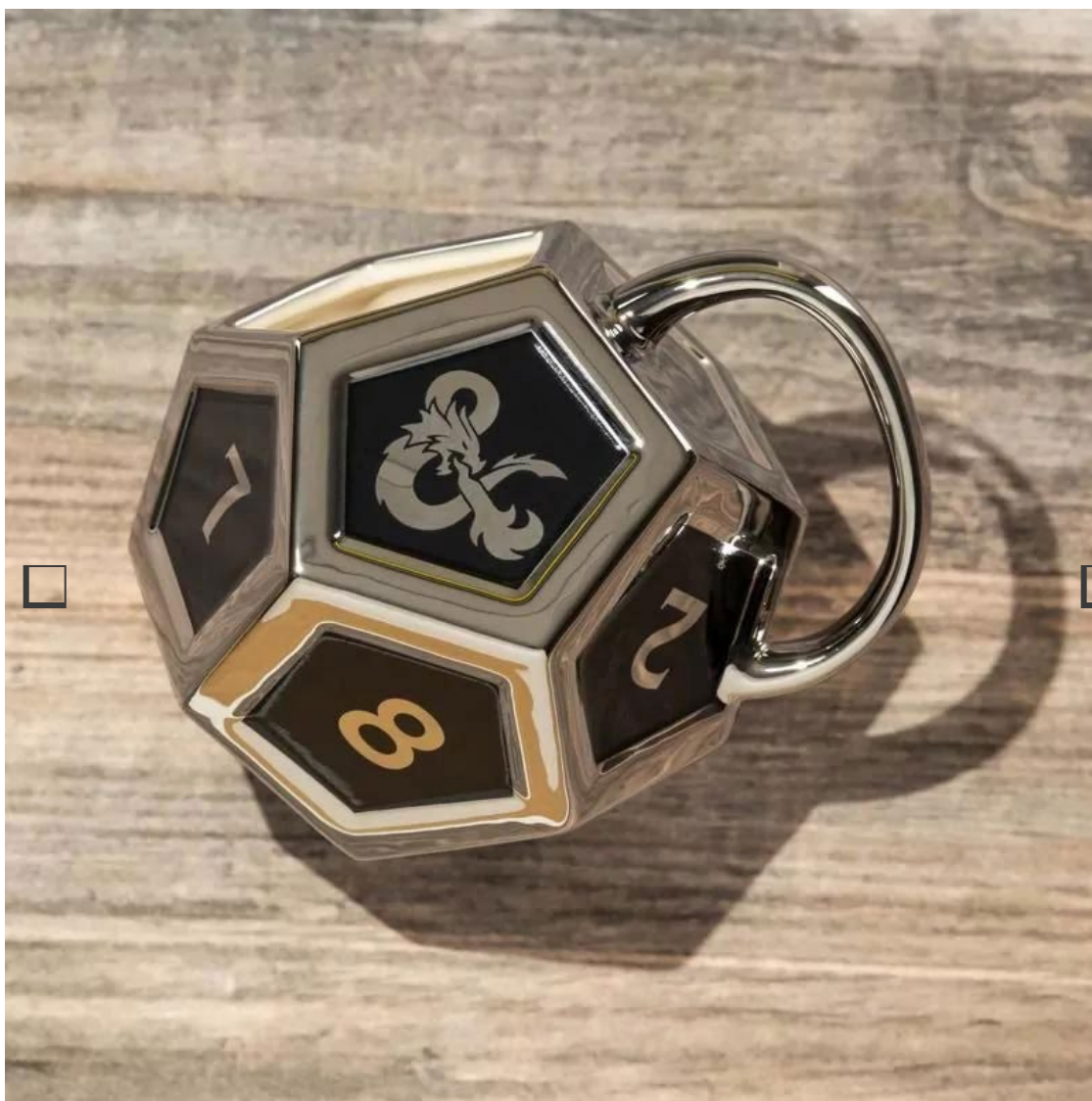
IN THE WORKS



Paladone Dungeons & Dragons Gift Items

Continue our tour of the hot new products
coming soon to a tabletop near you...

Matt Chapman



Based in Brighton in the United Kingdom (with offices in Los Angeles and Hong Kong), design house Paladone is staffed by gifting gurus. Their latest mission is to create fun products for the home and beyond based on the Dungeons & Dragons roleplaying game. And if you love dice as much as we love dice, you're going to want to get your hands on the first products being sent out to retailers in early March 2020.

"We've always enjoyed giving fans a way of subtly supporting their brands, so some of the items in our new range are supposed to be recognizable only to those 'in the know'," says Karen Giles, Licensing Executive at Paladone. "We particularly enjoyed embracing the varied dice used to play Dungeons & Dragons. Outside of the RPG world most people have only ever seen a d6 so there's a real feel of ownership amongst roleplayers when it comes to die with more or fewer sides than that."

If you are a gamer who enjoys the style of a dice that goes beyond the boxy d6, you'll no longer have to hide your light under a bushel—pun very much intended.

“Everyone likes to theme their parties and other events, whether it's birthdays, the holidays or Halloween, so why not for a games night?” asks Giles. “I'll be putting that d20 light in the window by my front door to remind people what they're here for when they arrive!”

Paladone also got to sift through the amazing collection of D&D art available today, plastering a gnoll on its tome-like piggy bank and featuring classic foe the beholder on a heat-change mug. “The D&D Team provided us with a lot of assets,” explains Giles. “We were searching for artwork we thought fans would love and which would look amazing on the products we had planned. We set up a focus group of the many D&D players from around the business and thrashed out our favorites, settling on works created by [former *Dragon*+ cover artist] [Hydro74](#).”

The range of mugs will certainly help keep games night going for longer without breaks. A regular mug holds around 280ml but Paladone's d12-Shaped Mug holds 500ml, while its D&D Heat Change Mug XL goes even further with a 520ml liquid limit.

Having been in production for twenty-six years Paladone has already shipped millions of products to more than 80 countries around the world. The company is looking to add to that with its range of D&D products and looks to expand that offering even further over the next 12 months. “We can't give too many details away but we're digging deeper into that artwork—we love the look of the lich!—and we're thinking some more drinkware and lighting will go down well, as well as a continued focus on those iconic dice.”

Paladone's Dungeons & Dragons range includes mugs, enamel badges, a d20 keyring, a savings bank and a d20 light. The items can be pre-ordered at US retailers such as [Zavvi US](#) and found at UK sites such as [Zavvi](#) and [Merchoid](#), as well as being available directly from [Paladone](#).



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IN THE WORKS



Han Cholo Jewelry

Continue our tour of the hot new products coming soon to a tabletop near you...

Bart Carroll and Matt Chapman

King of bling Han Cholo has added four new items to its luxury range of D&D jewelry. Made of authentic .925 sterling silver, you'll look stylish as you share your love of the world's greatest roleplaying game. Whether you need the perfect cufflinks to go with that suit of armor, the right ring or wristwear to spur you on to roll a critical success or want everyone to be in no doubt who the DM is, they've got you covered.



MSRP: \$150 ([D&D Ampersand Cufflinks](#)); \$90 ([D&D Crit Hit Ring](#)); \$250 ([D&D Crit Hit Cuff](#)); \$165 ([Dungeon Master Ring](#))

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IN THE WORKS



Scooby-Doo Betrayal at Mystery Mansion

Continue our tour of the hot new products coming soon to a tabletop near you...

Oz Mills



Everyone knows about Mystery Mansion. The local townsfolk shun the mist-covered woods around the old house, telling stories of strange lights in the sky, ghostly sightings, and unearthly chanting. It's something of a relief when a van with the words *Mystery Machine* emblazoned on the side deposits four amateur sleuths and their lovable (if cowardly) canine companion at the property. They head inside, letting out one final cry of "Zoinks!" as thunder crashes overhead.

Scooby-Doo! Betrayal at Mystery Mansion takes the award-winning *Betrayal at House on the Hill* board game and adds the hijinks of the classic Hanna-Barbera cartoon. With its new theme and a keen eye for game mechanics it's better than a bowl of Scooby Snacks and is set to capture the imaginations of all ages.

There have been many incarnations of *Scooby-Doo* since the original show aired in the '60s and '70s and the team at Warner Brothers helped Lead Designer Brian Neff answer the difficult question of which version to focus on.

“We worked with the original television production of *Scooby-Doo*, which included the first three seasons. That gave us more freedom as we didn’t have to accommodate forty-plus years of *Scooby* content. We used the episode titles and the monsters that appeared in them to help tell that story. We could just sit down, watch an episode and ask, ‘How does this translate into the game experience we want?’” Neff says, revealing that content from movies featuring The Mystery Inc. Gang has also been added.



(Select to view)

CLUED UP

In *Betrayal at House on the Hill*, players set about exploring, discovering rooms as well as Omens and Items along the way. What they find eventually triggers the “Haunt”, at which point the “*Betrayal*” of the title takes place and one player goes up against the others to see which of them will win. In *Betrayal at Mystery Mansion*, Scooby-Doo, Shaggy, Velma, Daphne, and Fred gather “Clues” rather than Omens to learn what’s really going on. The Haunt triggers once they have amassed enough of those Clues—at which point one player switches sides to play the role of the Monster.

“Some Haunts are a lot more ridiculous than others but that’s what makes this game so much fun,” says Banana Chan, who wrote all twenty-five of the *Betrayal at Mystery Mansion* Haunts before

refining them with the rest of the design team. “What I’m most proud of is how we made sure each Haunt plays similarly to the way its respective *Scooby-Doo* episode or movie plays out.”

Omens weren’t the only aspect of the original game to get a *Scooby-Doo* makeover. Many tiles and items also reward the heroes with Scooby Snacks, which players can spend to reroll any die. Other rules have been streamlined to make the game more accessible for newer or younger players.

“One of the first things we did was to read the original game’s rulebook, the *Betrayal Legacy* rulebook and the *Betrayal at Baldur’s Gate* rulebook,” says Lead Designer Noah Cohen. “Any time we found a rule concept, we asked ‘What happens if we tweak this or even remove it?’ As a result, movement is different in this game—monsters and heroes no longer slow one another down as they move past each other. And if someone really dislikes playing the Monster when the Haunt is revealed, someone else can volunteer instead.”

“The base rules were already in a good spot and definitely had a strong *Betrayal* energy to them, but our version is even better suited for kids to read and understand,” adds Chan.

SEEING STARS

The new rules also remove the possibility of a player being eliminated and that person having to sit and watch everyone else enjoy the adventure.

“That was one of the main situations we wanted to avoid,” Cohen recalls, “In this version if players take enough damage to put them below their lowest value in a trait, they’re only out for one turn. Even in the show, there are plenty of instances where the gang gets knocked out, they see stars, then jump back into the action.”

If you’re thinking, ‘Jinkies, this sounds fun’ then you’re on the same page as the team working on it. “I have a six-year-old son, he loves *Scooby-Doo*, I grew up watching *Scooby-Doo*, and just the fact we’re gonna get to have this experience together is very exciting,” says Shelly Mazzanoble, Brand Manager for Avalon Hill.

“Some of my cousin’s kids did a bit of playtesting and it was really gratifying when they liked all the content while it was still in

prototype mode. They were letting their imaginations go wild,” Cohen remembers. “Just last week, they asked me when ‘their *Scooby–Doo* game’ was going to be coming out.”

Scooby–Doo! Betrayal at Mystery Mansion will be released (to answer Noah Cohen’s cousin’s kids) by Avalon Hill on July 24, 2020 with an MSRP of \$35. Pre-order at your **local game store**, or online at retailers like **Walmart** or **Amazon**.

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Creature Feature: Moonrats

Seeing as 2020 is the Year of the Rat it's time to uncover what these creatures are really capable of.

Oz Mills



Rats: they're sneaky, mean looking, and often found in refuse; they swarm, they bite, and were once thought to spread the plague. Is it any wonder—much the same as wasps and snakes—they can seem like creatures we should instinctually avoid, even if they have gone from being pests to pets for some people? Although this

human reaction does explain why they've long been a staple of fantasy adventures, usually as low-level threats.

Many a roleplaying story has seen its heroes introduced to the world when they're hired to clear a cellar of rats which are scaring away the customers. What if they weren't just there for scraps of food? Rats are already viewed as naturally intelligent (just ask all the **maze-makers** in the scientific community). Were their mental powers further increased, a mere rat can become a truly formidable foe. That was certainly the view taken by illithids, who bombarded these creatures with psionic energy to turn them into cranium rats, psionically enhanced spies who reported unseen from the midst of a city's regular rodent population.

THE MOONRAT

Dungeons & Dragons has also previously been infested with moonrats. Originally created by Steve Winter in the 3.5 *Monster Manual II*, moonrats were similar to their humanoid **wererat** brethren in that they transformed with the moon. In a moonrat's case, this change isn't physical but sees them growing smarter and more devious. Having these rats gain intelligence during the full moon is a straightforward enough shtick; but it's the possibilities that are opened up by such a dastardly creature that makes them so compelling.

“The fact that anyone remembered they existed struck me. I recall the reaction to my original manuscript was, ‘Moonrats, really?’” says Winter, who was happy to hear his creation is still beloved today. He cites his inspirations for this unusual creature as coming from multiple sources.

“I had read a short story that involved a similar idea. It wasn't rats, it was probably a tale from the golden age of science-fiction, where explorers were on a planet



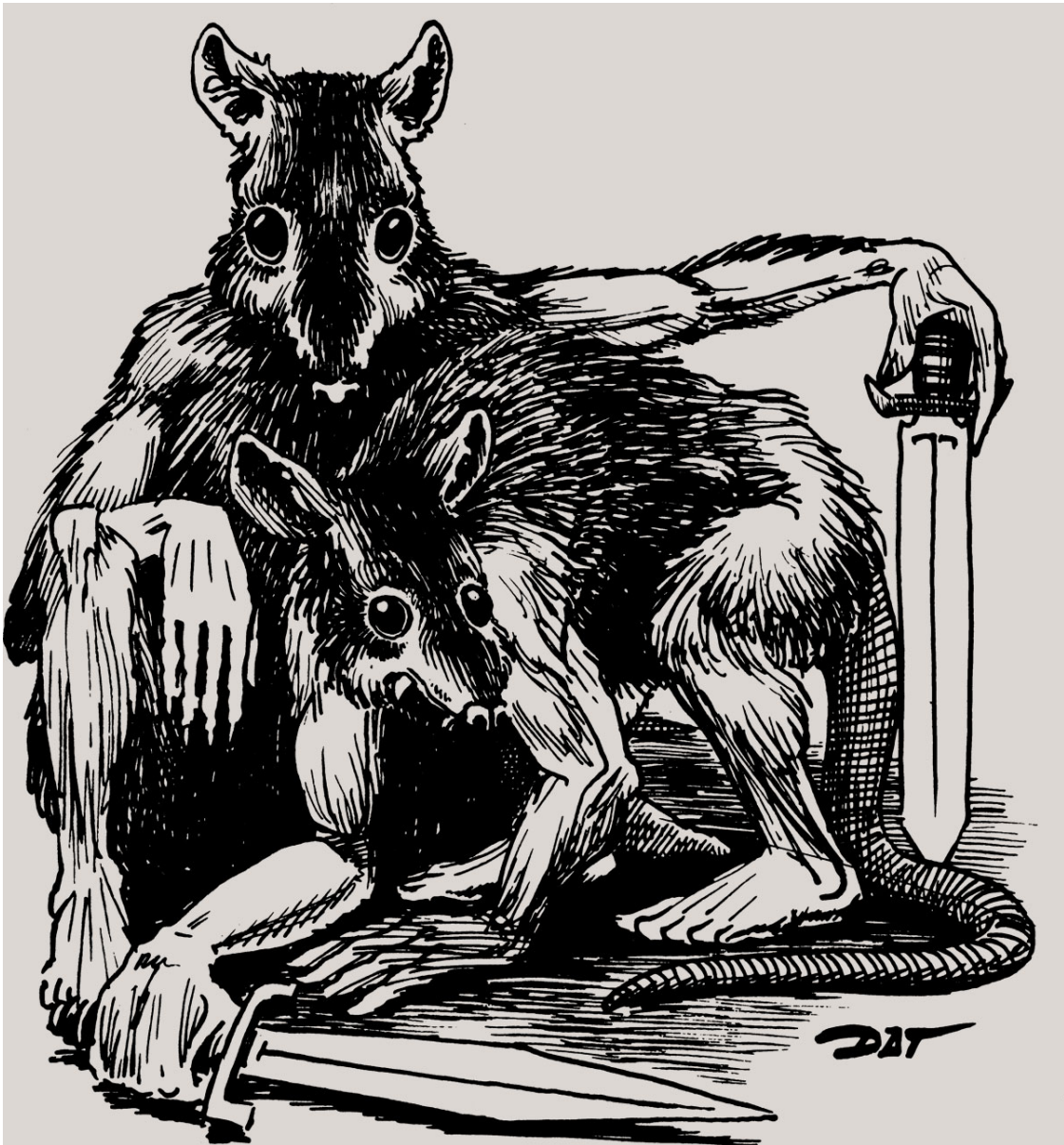
with weird little lifeforms and when the moon came out they organized somehow. Fritz Leiber also featured intelligent, scheming rats in one of his *Lankhmar* stories so I don't want to steal any credit away from him."

Having put his unique stamp on these ideas, Winter created a monster that has excited DMs for years. Moonrats have become the sinister agents of evil in numerous D&D campaigns, much to the chagrin of players and their characters. Classic discussion threads on the internet have considered various **schemes** and **plot hooks** for their use within campaigns. That's the beauty of a creature which gains the ability to fiendishly plot once every month, displaying a unique level of cunning while staying hidden at the same time.

"As a DM, it's the kind of thing I love because it's not just a monster to fight, it's a mystery to solve. Nobody pays any attention to the rats! When evil temples are springing up or the mayor is acting oddly and no-one can work out who's behind it, why would anybody think, 'Hmm, might it be the rats?'" he explains.

"I've always imagined blackmail as being their prime tool. Because they're the perfect spies, they see what everyone is doing all the time. Once they get to the point when they can really plan and coordinate, they can start writing and be the perfect agents to force humans to build temples to a dark entity. When you unleash them, there's really

no limit to what they can do.”



Sadly, Winter never had the opportunity to properly use moonrats in his own campaigns, previously featuring them in a game that didn’t last long enough for their machinations to come to light.

“And no-one’s ever used them against me,” he laments, although he describes the Reddit thread where players discover a strange contraption that could be a device to send the rats to the moon itself as, “Perfect! Just hearing that people are using them has got me jazzed to do something with them again. It would be a lot of fun to do an adventure that has them pulling the strings on a wider area than just a small town.”

The Dungeons & Dragons 5e Homebrew community has lovingly

recreated moonrats for fifth edition on its Tumblr page. Click the button below to view the stats and description written by demodds and HawaiianBrian, based on the reddit discussion highlighted above.

[ACCESS THE MOONRATS HOMEBREW](#)

DRAGON RATS

Groups of organized rodents might be a challenge but rats also become scarier the bigger and meaner they get. Contrary to Wesley's claims, Rodents of Unusual Size did exist in *The Princess Bride*—and in D&D, there have been dire rats, giants rats, and worse.

For this issue's Creature Feature, Dan Dillon from the D&D Team presents appropriate crossover entry for the Year of the Rat, the dragon rat! As Dan writes:

“Dragon rats are vicious little rodents with patches of colored scales covering their bodies like armor, leathery dragon wings, and sharp fangs that crackle with destructive energy. A dragon rat is a terrible nuisance, more so than their mundane kin, as their destructive potential is augmented by their inherited dragon breath.

“That nuisance becomes a nightmare when dragon rats gather in great numbers, swarming up through the cracks or down from the sky to devour and destroy. An unchecked plague of dragon rats can poison vast water supplies, devour entire crops, and spread devastating fires.”

So whether enhanced by the moon or draconic heritage, we look forward to more dangerous rodents infesting your game.

[DOWNLOAD THE DRAGON RAT PDF](#)

MISCHIEF & MAYHEM

These days it's fairly common knowledge that a group of ravens is known as a murder, while a gathering of owls is called a parliament. But a group of rats? They are not a swarm, as might be assumed.

Instead, a group of rats is technically known as a mischief.



With that in mind, what should we call a group of wererats? Their very nature suggests the name should be something more dangerous than mischief. A sabotage? A catastrophe? Or perhaps a rascality; which sounds like a more fitting title for a collection of rats.

It's certainly more honest than calling a baby rat a kitten or pup, which seems like a misleading attempt to engender sympathy by leveraging both cats and dogs. Nice try rats. You're still icky!

Steven Winter has been involved in publishing Dungeons & Dragons in one capacity or another since 1981 and currently works as a freelance writer and designer in the gaming field. You can [find him online](#), where he actively avoids the distraction that is [his Twitter account](#).



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Moon Rats

Rattuna Luna, Moon Rats, are common rats whose intelligence is tied to the lunar cycle. On new moon they are as dull as any rat with nothing to differentiate them, but on full moon the Moon Rats understand anything a normal human would, and perhaps even more.

Patient schemers. Moon Rats always have a Goal. They have had generations upon generations of time to plan, and they are known to be nefarious. The Rats' leaders are responsible for guarding the plan, developing it, and passing it down to their followers. The mystery aspect comes from the townsfolk who are being manipulated/tricked/confused by the strange goings-on.

The goal of their scheme can be virtually anything, as long as it's not too minor. Examples might include trying to take over the world one town at a time, turning the townsfolk into Wererats, or trying to create a ritual to make the full moon permanent.

MOON RAT

Tiny magical beast, chaotic neutral

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 1 (1d4)

Speed 15ft

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|--------|---------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| 4 (-3) | 16 (+3) | 11 (+0) | 2 (-4) | 13 (+1) | 2 (-4) |

Skills Acrobatic +2, Stealth +6

Senses darkvision 30 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages —

Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)

Keen Hearing and Smell. Moon rats have advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or smell.

Mob Tactics. Moon rats gain a cumulative +1 bonus to attack rolls for each friendly creature that also has this trait and is within 5 feet of its target, to a maximum of +5.

Lunar Mind. Moon rats experience a monthly shift in their Intelligence. With each phase of the waxing and waning moon, their Intelligence score is increased or decreased as following: New Moon, 2; Crescent, 4; Quarter, 6; Half, 8; Gibbous, 10; Almost Full, 12; Full, 14. During any phase but New, moon rats can speak a broken, guttural Common. During a full moon they speak eloquently.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1 (1d4 - 2) piercing damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or get Sewer Plague.

Sewer Plague. It takes 1d4 days for sewer plague's symptoms to manifest in an infected creature. Symptoms include fatigue and cramps. The infected creature suffers one level of exhaustion, and it regains only half the normal number of hit points from spending Hit Dice and no hit points from finishing a long rest. At the end of each long rest, an infected creature must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, the character gains one level of exhaustion. On a successful save, the character's exhaustion level decreases by one level. If a successful saving throw reduces the infected creature's level of exhaustion below 1, the creature recovers from the disease.

Many methods. Since the Moon Rats are usually not in a hurry, their methods of accomplishing their goals can vary a lot. They might pose as spirits to convince the town elders to obey. Maybe start building a militia. Or they might perform secret rituals, utilize curses and drugs to affect the humans. Or they might exploit their ability to be anywhere and still unnoticed, using libraries and magical schools to research, and perhaps even training their smartest to cast useful spells.

The methods might visible and attract a lot of attention, like a rat necromancer raising hundreds of dead rats to swarm the streets on every full moon. But just as well the methods might be incredibly subtle and the small visible results only mildly confusing. Like a few missing books and minor supplies every few months to enable the rats to study and develop until the final phase and the decisive conclusion to their scheme.

Problems of the Cycle. The inconsistency of their intelligence poses a risk each month that they have to deal with; as their mindlessness returns, they might unknowingly undo much of their great plans. To mitigate the risk, the Moon Rats have to make their plans rat-proof. Usually that means making their important equipment inaccessible to ordinary rats (i.e. their own dumb selves). If a human were to stumble upon their constructions, he might wonder about the meaning of rat-sized doors with combination locks, for instance.

Credits: Stats and layout /u/rexlerlepp

Inspiration for flavor text /u/famoushipopotamus and others in the /r/DnDBehindTheScreen thread about Moon Rats

Flavor text /u/demodds

Variant Lunar Mind. Moon rats experience a monthly shift in their Intelligence. Each month during the 3 day full moon interval, their intelligence is boosted to human levels. Then they revert to normal rat intelligence.

The increase in Intelligence between individual rats during the full moon varies like it does with humans. Some rats' Intelligence might only increase to 8 while more apt rats gain Intelligence up to 14, perhaps even higher.



DRAGON RAT

Dragon rats are vicious little dragons resembling the rodents that are their namesake. They have patches of colored scales covering their bodies like armor, leathery dragon wings, and sharp fangs that crackle with destructive energy. A dragon rat is a much more terrible nuisance than its mundane kin, as its destructive potential is augmented by its inherited dragon breath. That nuisance quickly becomes a nightmare when dragon rats gather in great numbers, swarming up from beneath the ground or down from the sky to devour and destroy. An unchecked plague of dragon rats can poison water supplies, devour whole fields of crops, and spark devastating and widespread fires.

Draconic Origin. Whether the first dragon rats were the result of mad arcane experiments, a divine plague sent by draconic deities, or a strange twist of nature remains a mystery. Virtually all that is known is that they carry a virulent plague that can infect true dragons, and that this plague is the source of all new dragon rats. If a dragon egg contracts this plague (most commonly by being chewed on by a dragon rat), it undergoes a terrible transformation. When the egg hatches, it releases not a dragon wyrmling, but a swarm of dragon rats.

Vexing Infestations. Dragons despise dragon rats, not only because they destroy dragon eggs to procreate, but because they infest older dragons as parasites, similar to how fleas infest many lesser creatures. Dragons in areas prone to infestation often task groups of kobold servants to meticulously groom their scales and scour their lairs. Only by searching for and eliminating any trace of dragon rats can a dragon stem the tide of plague that might be carried to its incubating eggs.

DRACONIC HERITAGE

| Dragon | Damage Type | Breath Weapon |
|--------|-------------|------------------------------|
| Black | Acid | 5 by 30 ft. line (Dex. save) |
| Blue | Lightning | 5 by 30 ft. line (Dex. save) |
| Brass | Fire | 5 by 30 ft. line (Dex. save) |
| Bronze | Lightning | 5 by 30 ft. line (Dex. save) |
| Copper | Acid | 5 by 30 ft. line (Dex. save) |
| Gold | Fire | 15 ft. cone (Dex. save) |
| Green | Poison | 15 ft. cone (Con. save) |
| Red | Fire | 15 ft. cone (Dex. save) |
| Silver | Cold | 15 ft. cone (Con. save) |
| White | Cold | 15 ft. cone (Con. save) |

DRAGON RAT

Tiny dragon, unaligned

Armor Class 12 (natural armor)

Hit Points 3 (1d4 + 1)

Speed 30 ft., fly 30 ft.

| | | | | | |
|--------|---------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
| 4 (–3) | 12 (+1) | 12 (+1) | 3 (–4) | 13 (+1) | 6 (–2) |

Damage Immunities varies by heritage

Senses blindsight 10 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages —

Challenge 0 (10 XP)

Draconic Heritage. The dragon rat arises from a draconic source. Choose one type of dragon from the Draconic Heritage table. The dragon rat's breath weapon, bite damage, and damage immunity are determined by the dragon type, as shown in the table.

Keen Smell. The swarm has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 1 piercing damage, plus 1 damage of the type determined by the dragon rat's Draconic Heritage trait.

Breath Weapon (Recharge 6). The dragon rat breathes destructive energy as determined by its Draconic Heritage trait. Each creature in the area of the breath weapon must make a DC 11 saving throw, the type of which is determined by the dragon rat's Draconic Heritage. On a failed save, the creature takes 2 (1d4) damage of the noted type. On a success, the creature takes half as much damage.

SWARM OF DRAGON RATS

Medium swarm of Tiny dragons, unaligned

Armor Class 12 (natural armor)

Hit Points 22 (4d8 + 4)

Speed 30 ft., fly 30 ft.

| | | | | | |
|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
| 14 (+2) | 12 (+1) | 12 (+1) | 3 (–4) | 13 (+1) | 6 (–2) |

Damage Immunities varies by heritage

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, slashing

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, prone, restrained, stunned

Senses blindsight 10 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages —

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Draconic Heritage. The swarm arises from a draconic source. Choose one type of dragon from the Draconic Heritage table. The swarm's breath weapon, bites damage, and damage immunity are determined by the dragon type, as shown in the table.

Keen Smell. The swarm has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

Swarm. The swarm can occupy another creature's space and vice versa, and the swarm can move through any opening large enough for a Tiny rat. The swarm can't regain hit points or gain temporary hit points.

ACTIONS

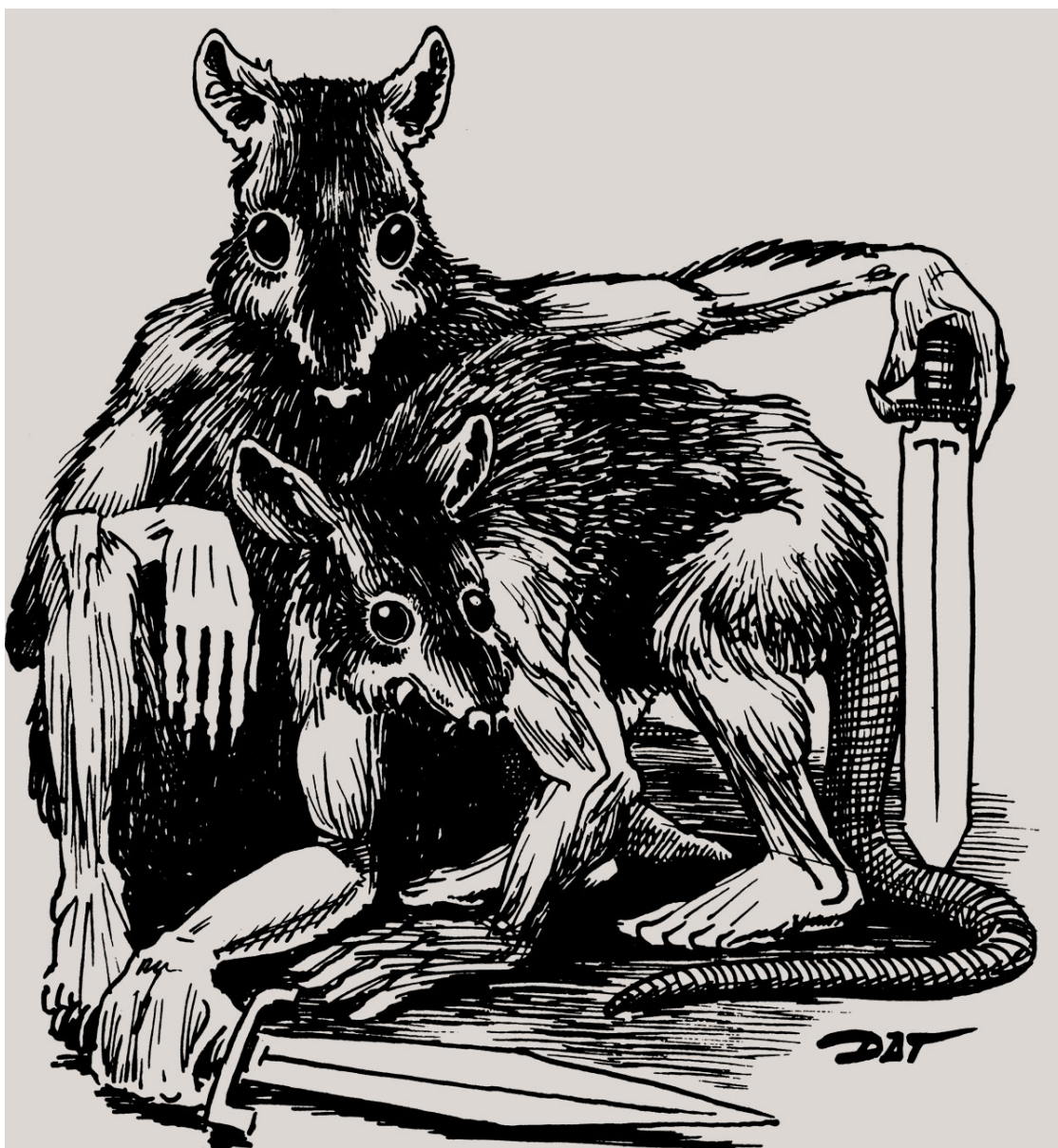
Bites. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 0 ft., one target in the swarm's space. *Hit:* 5 (2d4) piercing damage, or 2 (1d4) piercing damage if the swarm has half of its hit points or fewer, plus 7 (2d6) damage of the type determined by the swarm's Draconic Heritage trait.

Breath Weapon (Recharge 5–6). The swarm breathes destructive energy as determined by its Draconic Heritage trait. Each creature in the area of the breath weapon must make a DC 11 saving throw, the type of which is determined by its Draconic Heritage. On a failed save, the creature takes 15 (6d4) damage of the noted type, or 7 (3d4) damage if the swarm has half of its hit points or fewer. On a success, the creature takes half as much damage.



D&D Classics: Rats

It's the Year of the Rat—as it turns out, a frequent dungeon resident, whether in regular, giant, or were-form!



DRAGON/DUNGEON MAGAZINES

The wererat's original inclusion in D&D may have been influenced to some extent by Fritz Leiber's *Swords of Lankhmar* (for more on this, we'd point you to Tor.com's excellent [reading series](#)). However, let's start with werebeasts in general, as *Dragon* magazine was tackling questions regarding afflicted characters from even its earliest days. You've been bitten by a wererat! What's the worst that could happen?



Dragon #14: Lycanthropy—Progress of the Disease

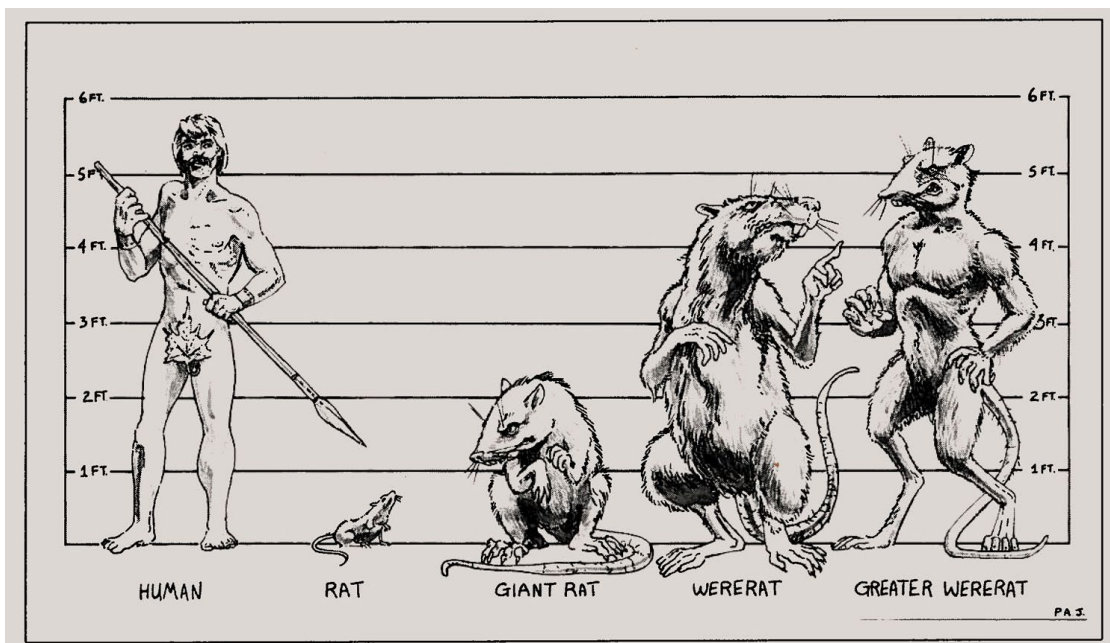
What happens if your players believe it's advantageous to contract lycanthropy? And once contracted, how does this affect their characters? By Gregory Rihn.

[DOWNLOAD PDF](#)

Dragon #24: Another Look at Lycanthropy

Further options for afflicted characters to suffer full or partial transformations, as well as chances for their alignment* to change. By Jon Mattson.

[DOWNLOAD PDF](#)



Dungeon #14: The Wererats of Relfren

This early *Dungeon* adventure featured events in a sleepy hamlet that included such locations as *The Lazy Cat Inn* and *The Emerald Moon Cheese Factory*. Is it any wonder wererats were involved!? We've included the adventure's appendix on wererats, which asks the burning question: "Many learned sages have wondered why lycanthropes have never infected the entire world with their dreaded disease."

[DOWNLOAD PDF](#)



Dungeon #217: Rats in the Undercellar

As an added bonus, we've included the following rat-filled scenario set in the mean streets of Baldur's Gate. A mystery for low-level characters to solve, DMs would be wise to keep even the title of the adventure a secret, as the culprits include rats, dire rats, and wererats! By Tim Eagon.

[DOWNLOAD PDF](#)

WERE DOMINANCE

Back in Issue 22 of *Dragon+* we looked at D&D horror tropes for Halloween. That included material mined from the eminently readable first edition *Dungeon Master's Guide*. As noted, even during the earliest years of D&D the creators felt it necessary to write that: "There have been many different approaches to the disease of lycanthropy. Many are too complicated to understand or are structured so poorly that the werecreature dominates the game."

[Download here](#)



3.5 EXEMPLARS OF EVIL

Exemplars of Evil was a toolbox to help DMs create memorable villains. Chapters were built around one primary villain (or dastardly duo) and the text delved into their background, allies, minions, and base of operations, including those set in Eberron and Faerûn.

In keeping with the Year of the Rat, one such villainous pair were the Tolstoffs— Edgar and Katarin, a brother and sister corrupted to

help liberate a world-shattering Work that Walks. The Tolstoffs' most useful and powerful servant was Draen Ralgael, a gnome cursed with lycanthropy. Although raving mad and utterly obsessed with eating living flesh, Draen remained their reliable agent, adept at moving unseen as a rat to learn the secrets of their enemies.

[DOWNLOAD PDF](#)

4E: PYRAMIDS OF SHADOW

In this final adventure in fourth edition's H-series, the titular pyramid serves as an extradimensional prison to catch and hold creatures from all planes of existence. One such captive is the charnel lord—an otyugh infused with necrotic energy and attended by charnel rats (though still no match for our **neo-er otyugh**).

We've pulled two rat-tastic encounters from the adventure for your use:

[DOWNLOAD PDF](#)

Of course, not all alignment changes are necessarily bad. While Leiber’s ratmen may have influenced the creation of wererats, Tolkien’s “skinchanger” Beorn also likely laid the ground work for werebears—and if you know your memes, you’ve seen the “curse” of the **goodly werebear.*

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The Dragon #14

The magazine of Fantasy, Swords & Sorcery
and Science Fiction Gaming



TD In Orbit

- Space Marines
- Robot Players in *MA*
- Lycanthropy in *D&D*

Lycanthropy — The Progress of the Disease

by Gregory Rihn

Q. What Do You Do With Eight Werebears? A. Whatever They Want.

Recently, an encounter involving a group of adventurers in hostile territory who were trying to pass as chaotics and a group of presumed chaotics who turned out to be lawful werebears resulted in one of the surviving adventurers catching the "werebear disease." This led to considerable speculation on the part of other characters regarding the advantages of being able to become a bear invulnerable to ordinary weapons whenever the going got tough, especially now that there was a friendly lycanthrope handy to inoculate them at minimal pain and cost. Obviously, werebearhood is not the answer to all an adventurer's dreams. However, just as obviously, a referee does not want every character in his campaign to be able to become a bear at will. The prospect of an epidemic of lycanthropy breaking out forces the promulgation of some rules limiting the abilities of player-character-lycanthropes, while still retaining the role as a playable option.

Note: At this time I was not aware of the increases in strength, speed, and hit dice of these beings that are recommended in the Black-moor supplement. While these are desirable, their use makes the imposition of some limitations even more necessary.

The Onset of the Condition

As per *Dungeons and Dragons* guidelines, characters bitten by lycanthropes have a 50% chance of catching the condition, with the first shape-change occurring in 30-60 days.

Due to the supernatural nature of lycanthropy, the disease disrupts the physical and mental channels of supernormal energies. Therefore, over the period of incubation the victim of lycanthropy will suffer a proportional loss of all magical, clerical, or psychic ability, which becomes complete with the onset of the first transformation.

The first transformation will usually be involuntary, characteristically occurring during dreaming sleep, or during a period of physical or mental stress, such as combat. At this time the lycanthrope's newly gained animal nature will tend to predominate, (95% chance) resulting in blind panic. The victim must then be calmed or subdued, at which time the victim's human *persona* may assert control, although there is a 10% chance that the shock will cause insane subjugation of the human *persona* to the animal nature, which will persist even when the victim is returned to human shape, and must be cured in the manner of other insanities. Thus there is a distinct chance that a new lycanthrope may escape into the wilderness and assume the life of a beast, unless restrained by his friends.



The new lycanthrope cannot revert to human shape of his own will, as he lacks sufficient experience to control his bodily process. Even more experienced lycanthropes cannot control the process perfectly, and there is a decreasing chance that they may not be able to change back, which should be checked upon each transformation. There is also a slight chance that the animal nature may assert itself. Both should be checked upon each transformation to the wereshape.

Fortunately, there are a number of ways in which reversion to human shape may be effected. More experienced lycanthropes of the same weretype may induce shapechange in either direction by the laying on of hands. A *polymorph others* spell can effect the change to human shape without affecting the ability to become an animal at a later time. An illusionist may hypnotize the subject and induce the change. (*One dungeon I am aware of has mysterious machines which can reverse the shapechannel!*) A clerical *cure disease* or a healing *cure lycanthropy* spell cast upon the subject while in animal form will result in permanent loss of the disease and reversion to human form. There is a slight chance that an exhausted lycanthrope may revert to human form while sleeping, but this is undependable. (About 5% chance, higher if exhaustion is extreme, or the subject has been severely wounded.)

The Progress of the Condition

Werebears are the most usable type of lycanthrope for player characters. (*Note: Non-player werebears are usually lawful, and extremely reluctant to contribute to the spread of the disease, sternly disapproving of those who do.*) All others, (wolf, rat, boar, tiger) while retaining their intelligence and cunning in animal shape are less able to control their beastly natures. This carries over into their human lives, so that they become progressively more wild, dangerous, and animalistic in



habit and in attitude. They come to prefer the company of their own kind and similar animals and to be untrusting, at best, and generally hostile toward normal humans.

Werebears will also tend to become more bearish in nature. They will add a bearish layer of fat. They will sleep much of the time in the winter, if they are able. They will prefer wilderness of towns, and will lead solitary lives, perhaps accompanied by one of their own kind of the opposite sex, and possibly children.

Note: Children of uncured lycanthropes inherit the condition. Lycanthropy, however, is not transmissible via intercourse, but only via the bloodstream. Children of chaotic types can be taught to change as soon as their parents are able to teach them. Hereditary werebears, or others not raised among their own kind, will have their first transformation at the onset of puberty. Lycanthropes in animal shape are sterile as regards normal animals of the same type, which is why the woods are not full of the offspring of lycanthropes who went insane and believe themselves beasts.

Lycanthropes of all sorts will tend to become more hairy when in their human forms. Note that this will be human hair, growing in the ordinary human patterns. A man's beard, for example, would become more thick and heavy, brows grow together, and body hair become more evident. Women, however, will not grow beards unless they are already disposed to do so. Finger and toenails become thicker and more clawlike. There is a tendency, for teeth to gradually become more pointed. All forms experience a change in body odor which will make it impossible to go near horses or mules. Werecats in advanced stages have been known to retain slit pupils (and presumably catlike night vision) in their human shapes. All lycanthropes will be recognizable by a fine growth of hair in the palms of their hands, on on the soles of the feet.

The Wereshape

With the exception of werecats and some extraordinary werewolves, a lycanthrope in his animal shape has all the attributes of an ordinary animal of his type, though werewolves tend to be large as wolves go. This includes sight, hearing, scent, mass, etc., and often extends to specific variations among werecats, where tigers, leopards, panthers, and pumas have been reported, and bears, including black, grizzly, and even polar werebears.

While there are many things animals may do that are beyond human abilities, werereatures suffer the limitations inherent in their animal shapes. For example, animals cannot see colors. Lycanthropes may not speak human languages while in animal form, though they may still understand those that they know. They may learn the language of the species of their wereshape, and may understand and speak it in their human shape if they are sufficiently intelligent. (*Note:* Cooperation between lycanthropes and the animals they resemble is not necessarily automatic. For example, in order to gain the cooperation of a pack of real wolves, a werewolf would have to fight and subdue the "alpha wolf", or pack leader. Probably a simple matter, since the wolf's claws will not harm the werewolf. It should take considerable effort to round up and control any number of bears, tigers, or similarly solitary or paired creatures).

Lycanthropes in animal shape will not be able to use standard weapons or any equipment intended for human use. (Requiring a thumb to grasp, etc.) This should include magic items intended to be activated by humanoid energies (rods, etc.). Passive magical items such as amulets or rings of protection may be used if they can be retained upon the beast form. Most potions will not work upon lycanthropes in wereshape. Poison, however, will.

(Note that rats, unlike other animals, lack a vomit reflex and thus can successfully be poisoned by substances and dosages that another animal would throw up and get out of their system. Accordingly, the saving throw of wereshaped wererats against ingested poisons should be reduced.)

When changing to the wereshape, the lycanthrope must shed clothing or equipment that would hamper him. Full plate or chain armor is thus not recommended. Such items do NOT "disappear" and "reappear" when a lycanthropic shapechange is made. Lycanthropes will find it advisable to wear loose clothing that is easily discardable. They will generally prefer leather, skins, or wool fabrics to metal, cotton, linen, or silk.

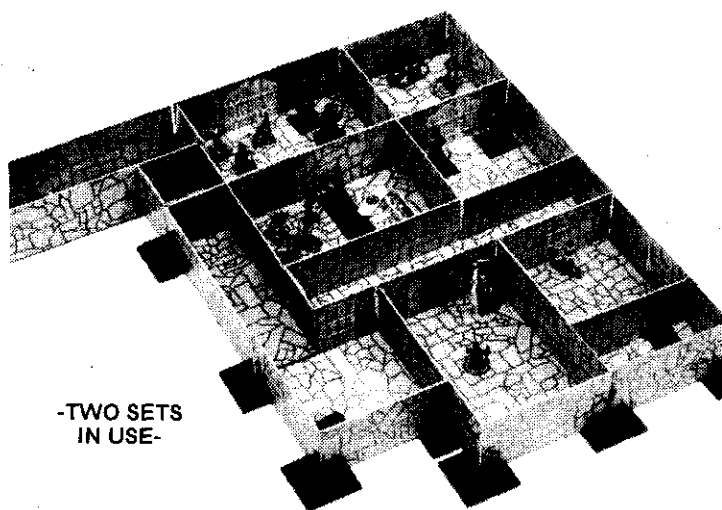
The Lycanthrope Experience

Persons who have just become lycanthropes cannot revert to human form at will until they have gained 2500 experience points in addition to their previously gained experience. They may transform only once per day on their own, and may still involuntarily transform during dreams or periods of stress, and such transformation uses up their one chance per day. More experienced lycanthropes can induce a second shapechange in others, but this requires a full day of rest in those it is done to, and cannot be done more than once per day, as the lycanthrope in whom the change has been induced will be completely exhausted upon return to human shape. Reversion to human shape *must* be assisted in such a case. Ability to transform more frequently, change back at will, and be free of involuntary transformations increases with experience gained.

All experience gained during one's tenure as a lycanthrope must be calculated in two ways: first, to determine one's skill in dealing with one's lycanthropy; and second, for all standard purposes. For example, a fourth level fighter, may contract lycanthropy. He still possesses the skill and experience of a fourth level fighter, and operates as such in his human shape. However, he will suffer the inconveniences of a first "level" werebear — involuntary transformation, inability to change back, etc. Once he has gained 2500 experience points since the date of first transformation, he will be a second "level" werebear but probably still a fighter of the fourth level. By the time he has gained 10,000 experience points since the date of first transformation he would be a fighter of the fifth level and a werebear of the fourth. Initially he would fight as a "monster" of four hit dice in wereshape (unless the *Blackmoor* modifications are in effect), and, when he gained another hit die as a fighter, assuming fighting experience is retainable from one shape to another, he would add one as a bear. As a fighter by trade, if he is cured, he may retain the full value of experience earned while a werebear.

If a magic user or other "specialist" cannot or elects not to be cured, experience gained since first transformation will affect his *fighting* skill in the same manner, since he will have effectively retired from magic use. He would have to fight as a magic-user of his hitdice

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due to his unfamiliarity with fighter's equipment. Referee's may calculate how long it would take such a person to use a sword effectively, if it is possible at all. It is assumed that some bearish instincts will aid him in fighting as a bear.

Clergy, of course, will not necessarily suffer the handicap of being unfamiliar with weapons and armor. Though werebear clerics would lose their miraculous powers, they may retain their holy orders, depending on the ruling of their establishment of religion. They will obey the usual weapon restrictions in order to remain in good standing. The cleric's ability to turn undead may at the DM's option be reduced by half (as with psionics) or retained fully, since this power uses none of the ordinary spell trappings, but seems to depend more on the cleric's wisdom, devoutness, and courage in his faith.

If a magic-user, cleric, or psychic has allowed the disease to progress to a point where there has been a measurable loss of special abilities before being cured, it will require the same amount of time for the lost abilities to be fully recovered. Magic-users, clergy, or psychics who have been a lycanthrope for some time before being cured may apply only 50% of the experience earned during that period to his lifetime total, as experience for these classes should hinge on the use of their supernatural powers.

Thieves generally function as fighters in this regard. This is the only other class where lycanthropy may prove to be a positive asset, due to increase in strength, endurance, etc., and there seem to be few drawbacks for this class.

Rangers function as fighters, but cannot gain any holy or magic powers while the disease persists.

Bards are treated as the other classes. Over the long haul, bard characters will suffer a loss of charisma, due to excessive hairiness, pointed teeth, animal breath and body odor, a taste for raw meat, and the disconcerting tendency to become an animal from time to time. His chances to charm should be somewhat reduced.

Characters who become lycanthropes in the course of the campaign may retain the skills to use magical devices that they were able to use before infection. If a character begins life as a lycanthrope, he/she may be a fighter or a thief, and may use appropriate magical items. Potions may affect lycanthropes while in human form (and have generally human metabolism). A lycanthrope may drink a potion in human form and then attempt to change shape. The referee should determine the results at his option.

The change from man to beast is not instantaneous, although time of transformation reduces with experience. The lycanthrope may still attempt to fight during this period, although at considerably reduced effectiveness, as a man for the first half of the conversion period, by which time hands have become too much like paws to grasp weapons, and as a beast, with increasing efficiency for the remainder of the period. The lycanthrope will not be fully invulnerable to normal weapons until the change is complete, taking half damage from normal

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weapons at the half-way point. A low-level werebear who takes six rounds to change fully would fight as follows: round one, normal level; round two, level minus two; round three, level minus four; round four, bear minus four; (claws and teeth have reached minimal offensive effectiveness) round five, bear minus two; round six, normal bear ability. Of course somewhere in here he has to shed his clothes. Hopefully, if he is changing intentionally, he can get it done before the fight starts.

Further Options

These are not necessarily recommended, but are put forward to inspire further experimentation.

A known lycanthrope in a party may have an adverse effect on morale, depending on how well he is known/liked by the other characters.

Allow lycanthropes to reject some damage when turning to animal form, as druids do.

Allow new characters a percentage chance (say, 1-5%) or some other criterion, to be a hereditary lycanthrope or some such from the beginning. Humans only.

Other weretypes. Other cultures have were-eagles, -sharks (a natural for mermen . . . and were-hyenas. Fairy tales have skinchanging swans and seals. Horror movies have produced wereapes and even weresnakes. Anthony Boucher's "The Compleat Werewolf" mentioned a man who was a were-dinosaur. Obviously, this would rapidly get out of hand if not rigidly controlled.

Allow lycanthropes to be hit by ordinary weapons, but to regenerate damage, even if "killed" immediately, as vampires do. This would be costly in energy, and require rest. Wounds made by silver or

| Level | Experience | Changes per day | Chance of Involuntary Changes | Chance of Changing Back Voluntarily | Chance of Beast Nature Predominance | Speak language of species (% comprehension) | Time required for change |
|-------|------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|--------------------------|
| 1 | 0 | 1 | 50% combat or sleep | 0% | 10% | 0% | 6 melee rounds |
| 2 | 2500 | 1 | 50% combat or sleep | 50% | 09% | 10% | 6 rds |
| 3 | 5000 | 2 | 25% combat/sleep | 60% | 08% | 20% | 4 rds |
| 4 | 10000 | 2 | 25% comb/10% sleep | 75% | 07% | 30% | 4 rds |
| 5 | 20000 | 3 | 10% comb/10% sleep | 80% | 06% | 50% | 2 rds |
| 6 | 35000 | 3 | 5% comb/5% slp | 85% | 05% | 75% | 2 rds |
| 7 | 50000 | 4 | 5%/5% | 90% | 04% | 90% | 1 rd |
| 8 | 100000 | 4 | 0% comb/5% | 95% | 03% | 95% | 1 rd |
| 9 | 150000 | 5 | 0%/02% | 99% | 02% | 99% | 1/2 rd |
| 10 | 200000 | 5 | 0%/01% | 99% | 01% | 100% | 1/2 rd |

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magic weapons do not regenerate.

Werebeings killed and not raised may not rest quietly, may come back as some form of undead to haunt their friends. The legend that a man who was a werewolf in life may become a vampire after death is fairly well-known.

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Another Look at LYCANTHROPY

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As described previously in *D&D®* and *Blackmoor*, any warm-blooded being who is seriously injured by a lycanthrope (say 50% or more of the possible damage they can take) stands a good chance of becoming one of the same type himself. There are, however, several varieties of lycanthropy which have not been covered and are listed below. Percentage dice are rolled when the person is first bitten to determine which type of lycanthrope he will become:

Dice Roll:

Lycanthrope Type:

| | |
|---------|---|
| 01 - 15 | A |
| 16-20 | B |
| 21-25 | C |
| 26-50 | D |
| 51-60 | E |
| 61-70 | F |
| 71-00 | G |

Lycanthrope Types:

A — The infected character will turn into the type of creature which hit him from now on, both mentally and physically, until cured; i.e. he will be a whole new character — even his alignment will change to that of the creature which bit him. This change will occur within one to eight days of being bitten and can only be cured with a *Cure Disease* or *Remove Curse* spell from a cleric at least one level above the creature that affected the player. The player will have all of the creature's regular abilities and limitations (i.e. if he changed to a were-rat he would be able to summon rats as usual) but none of his own from before he was affected as long as he is a lycanthrope.

B — The infected character will stay in human form but will have the lycanthrope's mentality from now on until cured. This change will occur within three to thirty-six turns and can be cured by a *Cure Disease* or *Remove Curse* spell from any cleric. The player will keep all of his physical attributes (i.e. if he had strength of 14 this would not change) but will have the lycanthrope's mental attributes and lower intelligence (he will not be able to cast spells, for instance, but can talk to other lycanthropes). For more information on the lower intelligence, see the *Determination of Attributes and Abilities* section. Note that this type of lycanthropy is extremely rare and is also a type of insanity which can be used for curses, Scarabs of Insanity, etc.

C — The infected character will keep his own mentality but will gain the physical characteristics of the lycanthrope which bit him. This change will occur within two to twenty-four turns of being infected and can only be cured by a *Cure Disease* or *Remove Curse* spell from a cleric of at least seventh level. The player will keep his mental attributes (his intelligence, wisdom, languages, and any spells which do not involve body gestures, etc.) but he will have the hit dice, armour class, strength, dexterity, and other physical attributes of the lycanthrope that bit him.

D — This is the same as type A, but, beginning 1-12 turns after being infected, the player only changes to his lycanthrope form under a full moon or under great stress (see type G for types of stress).

E — This is the same as type B, but, beginning 2-16 turns after being infected, the player only has the lycanthrope's mentality under a full moon or under great stress (see type G for types of stress).

F — This is the same as type C, but, beginning 2-16 turns after being infected, the player only has the lycanthrope's physical form under a full moon or under great stress (see type G for types of stress).

G — One of the most common, yet least understood, types of lycanthropy: under a full moon or in situations of great stress (beginning 1-10 turns after being bitten) the infected player may (95% chance under full moon, base 40% chance under stress-add or subtract to this

according to type of stress) change to a sort of part man, part monster being. Note that stress could be any situation where the player is in great danger or extremely frustrated and angry. This could be anything from trying to pull his comrades out of a pit before they get eaten by a monster to fighting a seemingly invulnerable enemy or losing a battle. This may sound something like the "Incredible Hulk," but that is the general idea.

In any case, this being will be (at least mentally) something like the player with the following variations:

1. The creature's alignment may be different. Check in D&D to see what that type of lycanthrope's usual alignment is and compare it to the player's alignment on the chart below to see what the creature will end up being:

| Creature's | | Player's | | | Player/Creature Will Be: | |
|------------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|--------------------------|--|
| Alignment: | Alignment | Lawful: | Neutral: | Chaotic: | | |
| Lawful | Lawful | 100% | — | — | | |
| Lawful | Neutral | 60% | 40% | — | | |
| Lawful | Chaotic | 20% | 60% | 20% | | |
| Neutral | Lawful | 45% | 55% | — | | |
| Neutral | Neutral | — | 100% | — | | |
| Neutral | Chaotic | — | 55% | 45% | | |
| Chaotic | Lawful | 20% | 60% | 20% | | |
| Chaotic | Neutral | — | 40% | 60% | | |
| Chaotic | Chaotic | — | — | 100% | | |

Percentages — are the percent chance of the player/creature being that alignment.

Example: A lawful character is infected by a chaotic Were-Rat. When he turns into the lycanthrope from the bite, there is a 20% chance it will be lawful, 20% chance it will be chaotic, and 60% chance it will be neutral. Thus, percentage dice are rolled to discover what alignment the player/creature will be.

This must be discovered the first time the player changes to his lycanthrope form, and it will always remain the same unless the player changes his alignment (in which case a new roll is made). If the creature is lawful, it will be lawful/good. If it is chaotic, it will be chaotic/evil.

2. The creature /player will have about one half of the player's abilities (spells, languages, etc. providing its lower intelligence will permit this) and about one half of the real lycanthrope's powers (so a Were-Rat of this type could summon 5-50 rats, not 10-100).

Obviously, a separate character sheet will have to be made for the player when he takes on his lycanthrope form. For more information on this, see the *Determination of Attributes and Abilities* section.

Players will probably realize that this type of lycanthropy is actually an advantage, as long as the creature's alignment is the same as the player's, since the creature is stronger and has more hitpoints. Nevertheless, if a player wishes to be cured of this condition, a *Cure Disease* or *Remove Curse* spell from a cleric of at least eighth level will do it.

Note: For types D, E, F, & G: Each time the player turns to a lycanthrope he will stay in this form for 2-12 turns or until the source of stress (or the full moon) is gone (whichever comes last).

Determination of Abilities and Attributes:

As explained previously, a separate player/creature character sheet will have to be made and attached to the player's regular character sheet for use when he is in his lycanthrope form. The player's basic attributes will remain the same with the following exceptions:

| Creature Type: | Intelligence | Strength | Constitution | Wisdom | Charisma | Dexterity |
|----------------|--------------|----------|--------------|---------|----------|-----------|
| Rat | — | — | plus 1 | — | minus 3 | plus 4 |
| Wolf | minus 1 | plus 2 | plus 5 | minus 2 | minus 3 | plus 3 |
| Boar | minus 4 | plus 4 | plus 3 | minus 4 | minus 5 | plus 1 |
| Tiger | minus 3 | plus 5 | plus 4 | minus 3 | minus 4 | plus 2 |
| Bear | minus 1 | plus 6 | plus 4 | minus 1 | minus 2 | — |

Note: To many people it may seem strange that a wolfs constitution would be better than that of say a bear, but remember that wolves often survive through incredible hardships such as hunger and cold, and I've yet to see a bear do as well. Also, it may seem odd that a bear would have as much intelligence as a wolf and more than any other animal (save the Were-Rat as explained in Greyhawk) — this is where fantasy (and this author's artistic license) comes in. I, as a Dungeon-Master, have always used Were-Bears (the only lycanthrope which is ever lawful/good) as somewhat magical, intelligent creatures in my campaigns, usually being the servants/companions of good Wizards and patriarchs. Since it is hard for a writer not to inject at least a bit of his experience into his work, I have listed them as such. Nevertheless, it must be remembered (and this has been explained over and over again in *D&D*) that the Dungeonmaster has the final word and can change these charts however he wants to fit his game as long as balance is maintained.

Along with the basic attributes, the speed, hitpoints, and saving throw matrix for the player/creature will be slightly different from those of the normal player:

| Creature | Speed | Hit Points |
|----------|----------|-------------------------------|
| Bats | plus 10% | |
| wolves | plus 40% | plus 2 points to each hit die |
| Boars | plus 20% | plus 4 points to each hit die |
| Tigers | plus 40% | plus 5 points to each hit die |
| | plus 30% | plus 6 points to each hit die |

Note: After the player has reached his maximum level (i.e. Lord, Wizard, etc.), they gain only one third of the above hit point adds per level (rounding off to the next highest whole number if it is a fraction).

| Saving Throw Matrix | | | | | |
|---------------------|--------------------|--------|---------|---------------|-------------------------|
| Creature Type | Deathray or Poison | Wands | Stone | Dragon Breath | staves & Spells (Magic) |
| Bats | minus 1 | plus 1 | minus 1 | — | — |
| Wolves | minus 3 | — | minus 2 | minus 2 | — |
| Boars | minus 2 | plus 1 | minus 2 | minus 1 | plus 1 |
| Tigers | minus 2 | plus 1 | minus 2 | minus 1 | — |
| Bears | minus 2 | — | minus 1 | minus 2 | minus 1 |

Numbers — are added to or subtracted from the amount needed to save from each category, not the number the player rolls (i.e. if a player needed 12 to save from poison, but was in his were-wolf form, he would only need 9).

Other Changes

Armour Class: will be the same as the lycanthrope's normal armour class as listed in the monster section of *D&D*. Note that players will have an odd sensation just before turning into a lycanthrope, so they will have time to take off any armour they have to keep it from getting wrecked (since a creature like a were-bear, for instance, is obviously bigger than a man). Optional: there is a 10% chance that if a player has a shield he may keep it when he turns to his lycanthrope form (providing the lycanthrope can use it, i.e. has front limbs which can hold it—only were-rats, were-bears, and type Glycanthropes fit this description). Thus, the player/creature's armour class would be one lower than usual, so a were-wolf with a shield would be armour class 4.

Level & Experience: of the player/creature will be the same as that of the player. Also, the creature goes up in the same steps as the player (i.e. a magic-user/lycanthrope would go up in steps of 5 regarding saving throws, etc.).

Supplies & Possessions: There is a base 65% chance that the lycanthrope will drop all supplies and possessions the player was carrying when it first changes (40% if type G and 0% if type C or F). Otherwise the player/creature will keep all of the player's supplies and possessions.

Languages: The creature will automatically speak its own language (i.e. were-bear, were-rat, etc.) and any other languages (which its altered intelligence will permit) that the player wants.

Closing Notes: players and Dungeonmasters are invited to make up their own rules regarding situations which have been left out due to lack of space and time, remembering that balance must be maintained at all times. As with *D&D* itself, these rules are only the basic skeleton of the possible situations and many more rules (and lycanthrope types) can no doubt be thought up.

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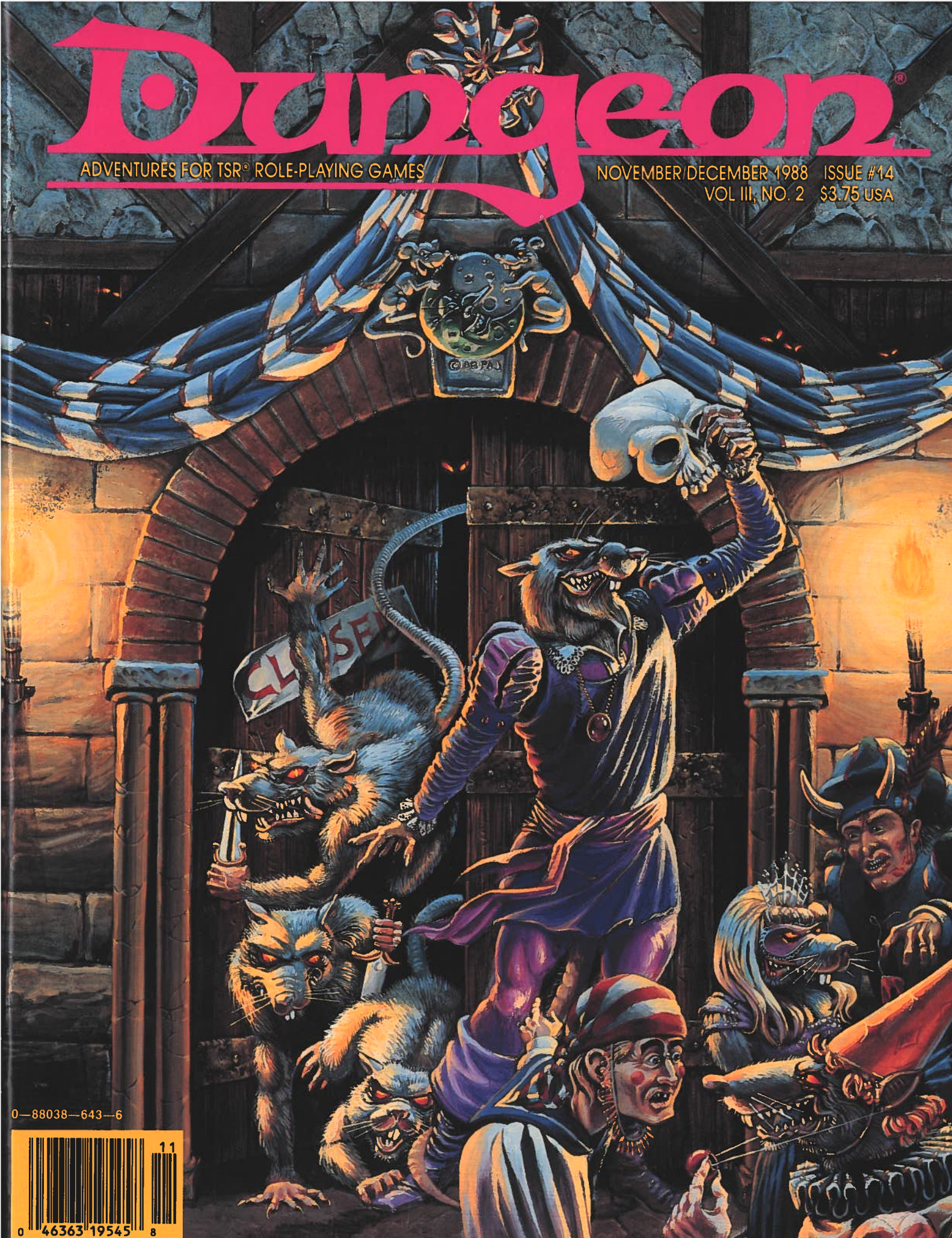
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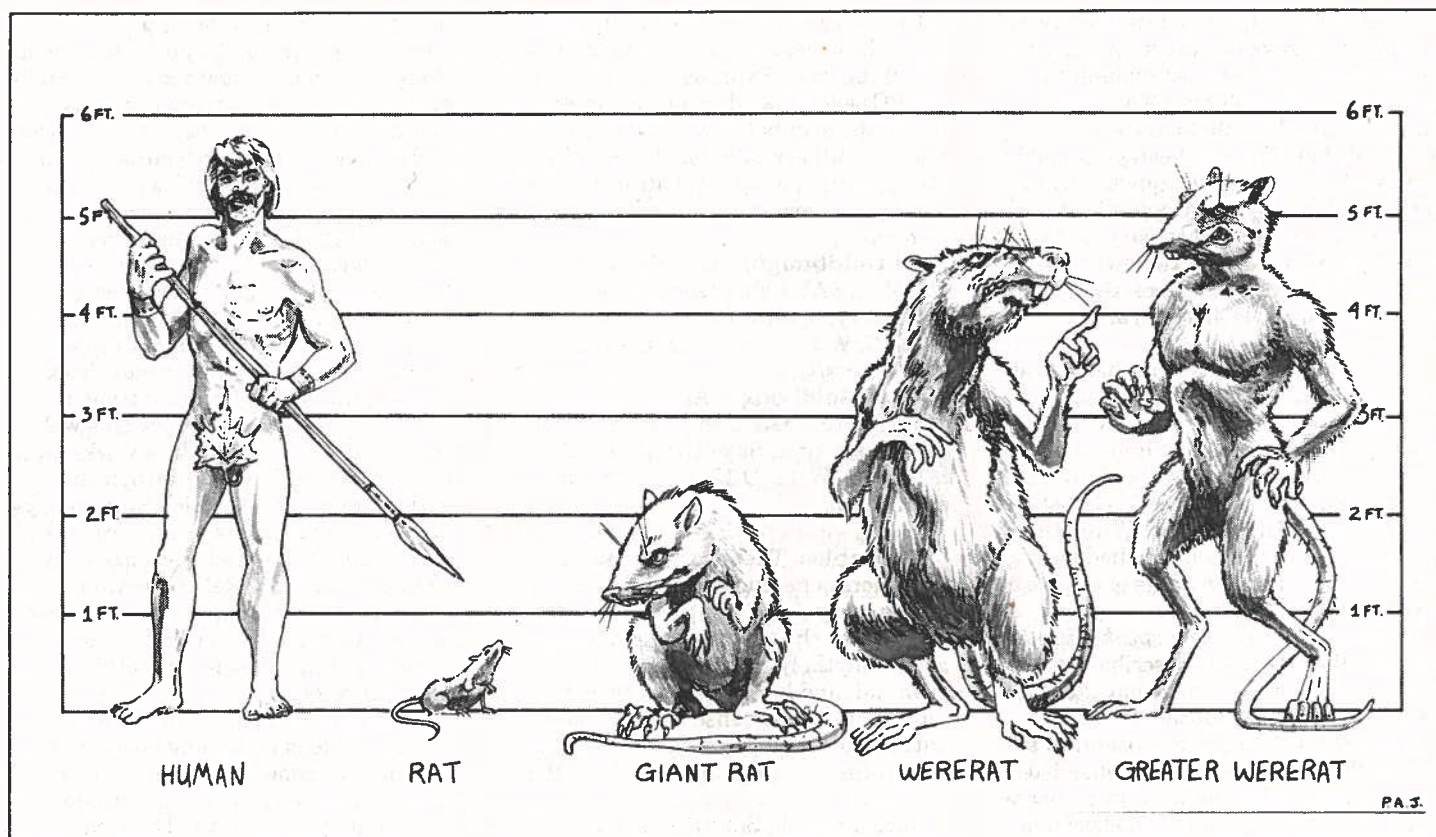
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On Wererats

According to the D&D Basic Set *Dungeon Masters Rulebook*, wererats are not like other lycanthropes. All other lycanthropes are human beings who can change into animal form, but wererats are giant-sized rats that can take on human form. This is only half of the story.

Usually, wererats are loosely organized sewer-dwellers that tend to dominate lesser groups of giant and normal rats, using them for food when nothing else is available. In this environment, only giant rats that escape being eaten can be infected with lycanthropy, as normal rats never have enough hit points to survive the infecting bite in the first place. Giant rats grow even larger once they've contracted the disease and become wererats themselves. The constant struggles for food and control as the wererats battle each other usually keep the wererat population under control; weak, aged, and stupid wererats are crowded out and eventually starve. Because of the unique habitats preferred by these peculiar lycanthropes, biting giant rats

is usually the only way of passing on this dread disease. However, wererats sometimes encounter human beings or demi-humans — most often adventurers looking for underground treasure or a way into a castle or town on the surface.

When demi-humans are infected with lycanthropy (losing 50% or more of their hit points from wererat bite damage), they sicken and die relatively quickly. Infected demi-humans will survive for one hour per point of Constitution (which allows them time to try to halt the progress of the disease). This gives PC parties a serious time limit should someone get bitten early in a fray. Infected demi-humans immediately feel weak, as if they had been poisoned (gaining a -2 on all rolls to hit and on saving throws), and feel a burning fever race through them. All demi-human clans teach about these phenomena, and demi-human PCs should each get an Intelligence check to realize that they've been infected with lycanthropy.

Humans who encounter these creatures rarely live to tell about it, as wererats are a Chaotic lot who enjoy human flesh immensely. In the extremely rare instance in which a

human being survives a wererat attack and is infected, a special lycanthrope is produced (providing, of course, that the unfortunate person is unable to obtain the curative assistance of an 11th- or higher-level cleric). Sages refer to these creatures as "greater" wererats because they retain their classes and abilities when in human form, but can change into man-sized rats if they so desire. Greater wererats have the game statistics of normal wererats, except that the original hit points and mentality of the affected characters are retained in lycanthrope form.

There are both benefits and drawbacks to becoming a greater wererat. The subject becomes immune to normal weapons, like any lycanthrope, when in either human or giant-rat form. However, no matter what the character's original alignment, the newly made greater wererat will eventually turn Chaotic. For PCs and NPCs, a Wisdom check is made once each week before shifting one alignment position (i.e., Lawful to Neutral, Neutral to Chaotic). If the PC is strongly devoted to an alignment (e.g., a Neutral druid or a highly Lawful cleric), add +2 to the

check. Still, when the transformation to being a wererat is done, the PC becomes Chaotic immediately, no matter what alignment was held beforehand. Father Thero, in this adventure, will retain his Lawful alignment until midnight on day 3, when he becomes a full lycanthrope and turns wholly Chaotic. PCs who become lycanthropes become NPCs under the DM's control, as per the *Dungeon Masters Rulebook*, page 33.

Greater wererats do not usually infect other beings or creatures with lycanthropy, since they prefer to remain in their more powerful human form and only resort to rat form as a means of escape or for deceit. For reasons that are not yet understood, lycanthropy can only be passed through the animal set of teeth by any lycanthrope. In the extremely rare event that a lycanthrope decides to deliberately spread its disease (as occurs in this adventure), the results can be devastating.

It is also an extremely rare event for a greater wererat to become established as the leader of his own group of normal wererats. Normal wererats are usually difficult to control and, being Chaotic, difficult to trust. But some small thieving bands have been known to ravage the countryside for a time before they were eventually thrown down by the local populace or by an anonymous group of adventurers.

Many learned sages have wondered why lycanthropes have never infected the entire world with their dreaded disease. The immunity lycanthropes have to normal weaponry makes them almost unstoppable under most circumstances, but their Chaotic nature and inherent inability to organize themselves have kept them fighting each other instead of banding together.

In any case, the existence of the greater wererat has only recently been discovered, even though the phenomena must have been occurring for centuries, so it is wise to say that not everything about lycanthropy has yet been divined. The events chronicled recently in the little town of Relfren only show the general populace how little the sages really know.

For convenience, statistics for normal rats, giant rats, normal wererats, and greater wererats are given here:

Normal rat: AC 9; HD less than 1 (1 hp each); MV 60'(20')/30'(10'); #AT 1 bite per pack of 5-10 (or per pack of 10 if more than 10 are present); Dmg 1-6 plus

disease; Save Normal Man; ML 5 (but flee from fire unless driven by magic or wererats); AL L; BD/36.

Giant rat: AC 7; HD 1½ (1-4 hp each); MV 120'(40')/60'(20'); #AT 1 bite; Dmg 1-3 plus disease; Save Normal Man; ML 8 (but flee from fire unless driven by magic or wererats); AL C; BD/36.

Normal wererat: AC 7 (9 in human form); HD 3*; MV 120'(40')/30'(10') (use former movement rate in human form); #AT 1 bite (1 weapon in human form); Dmg 1-4 (by weapon type in human form); Save F3; ML 8; AL C; BD/33.

Greater wererat: AC 9 (7 in rat form); HD and hp as per previous class and level*; MV 120'(40') (as per normal wererat in rat form, with swimming abilities); #AT 1 weapon (1 bite in rat form); Dmg by weapon type (1-4 in rat form); Save as per class and level; ML 8+; AL C.

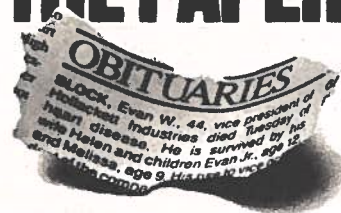
There is a 5% chance of contracting a disease from the bite of a normal or giant rat. This disease may be avoided by a Saving Throw vs. Poison; if this roll is failed, the victim has a 25% chance of dying in 1-6 days, otherwise falling ill and being unable to go adventuring for one month.

Wererats and greater wererats can summon and control 1-2 rats or giant rats each, with summoned creatures arriving in 1-4 rounds to obey all commands. A lycanthrope struck by wolfsbane in combat must make a Saving Throw vs. Poison or else flee in fear. In animal form, wererats and greater wererats can only be harmed by magical or silvered weapons or else by magical spells. The very touch of silver causes lycanthropes intense pain. In human form, wererats have slightly elongated faces and pronounced noses, though this is rarely seen as exceptional.

The normal wererats in this adventure prefer to remain in their giant rat form unless it is necessary to seize an item or escape in human form. The greater wererats prefer their human form at all times, unless their giant rat forms would be more helpful. At midnight on the third day, all wererats and greater wererats will be in their rat forms, to spread their lycanthropy as widely as possible among the townspeople.

Though both wererats and greater wererats can use normal tools and weapons in their human forms, neither will wear armor, as it hampers their abilities to change shape. Ω

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Rats in the Undercellar

A D&D® adventure for characters of levels 1-2

By Tim Eagon

Illustrations by Kieran Yanner and Scott Murphy

Cartography by Mike Schley

“Rats in the Undercellar” is set in Baldur’s Gate in the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting, and you can easily adapt it to another urban setting. The adventure contains everything needed to run it, but you can refer to the *Murder in Baldur’s Gate™* adventure for additional information.

BACKGROUND

Rothryn Toth—a gnome illusionist, con man, and fence—needed money and he needed it fast. A business deal with Osgur “the Fetcher” Hallorn, one of the Thieves’ Guild kingpins who rule Baldur’s Gate’s underworld, went sour. When Toth’s payments to the Fetcher came up short, the Fetcher sent henchmen to the gnome’s abode in the Undercellar, a labyrinth of subterranean chambers and passageways located beneath the Gate’s Upper City that serves as a fest-hall, tavern, and base of operations for the Guild. The gnome escaped harm by creating an illusion of another wizard to distract his assailants.

After that close call, Toth decided for safety’s sake to relocate to Waterdeep. Before he could move, he needed to recoup some of his substantial losses, and he desperately wanted revenge on the Fetcher. With

his remaining funds, the gnome reached out to contacts in the Feywild and, in the guise of a human wizard, hired a mercenary band of xivort thieves. With the xivorts’ ability to communicate with the Undercellar’s countless rats, they would eavesdrop on the Fetcher’s thugs, overhear their criminal plans, and then commit the crimes first; Toth would rebuild his finances with the proceeds from the thefts while undercutting the Fetcher. The xivorts, ignorant of the criminal politics in Baldur’s Gate and fooled by Toth’s illusory disguise into believing they were dealing with a human wizard, would unknowingly shoulder the risk. Toth set two conditions on the xivorts so they wouldn’t draw attention: they must restrict their activity to the less affluent Lower and Outer Cities, and they mustn’t kill anyone.

Toth’s role in the arrangement was to fence the stolen goods. Because the xivorts have little use for human gold, Toth had suggested that instead of paying them in coin, he would create for them a small army of humanoid constructs called *demomagens*. The xivorts jumped at that offer, while Toth planned all along to doublecross the xivorts. The two *demomagens* that he owned were enough to persuade the xivorts he could do what he claimed, but creating

magens is well beyond Toths' ability. Even if he could create magens, Toth is not so foolish that he would turn such a weapon over to xivorts.

So far, the xivorts have pulled off four lucrative heists, and no one is the wiser. But Toth didn't count on the mettle of their fourth victim, a steely dwarf businesswoman named Margda Silveraxe. Margda would never let criminals victimize her and get away with it, especially when they stole a prized family heirloom. When the Flaming Fist (the mercenary company that enforces law in the Lower City) could not apprehend the thieves, Margda started talking to other robbery victims on her own. Before long, she put out the word that she wanted to hire adventurers to look into the robberies independently of the Flaming Fist.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

The adventure begins when Margda Silveraxe hires the characters to investigate the burglary of her warehouse. She presents a list of other recent robbery victims to them—all targets of the xivorts, though Margda doesn't know that fact—along with the poisoned dart that the robbers used to disable her. Otherwise, she leaves the investigation up to them. The characters can interview the other victims, the Flaming Fist soldiers who initially responded, and a criminal who helped plan one of the original robberies that the xivorts preempted. All the evidence points to the Undercellar.

When the characters visit the Undercellar, they learn that its patrons are abuzz over current events and that they aren't the only ones investigating the situation. Twin brothers named Joren and Belken have been making their own inquiries.

The characters also attract the attention of Osgur "The Fetcher" Hallorn, the Guild's kingpin in the Upper City and the Undercellar. Agents of the Fist are arresting his operatives for the xivorts' crimes. He offers his help to the characters.

The twin brothers, who are actually wererats resentful of the xivorts' influence over the Undercellar's rodent denizens, are the characters' most promising lead. When the characters visit the brothers, they are interrogating a xivort captive. The characters can learn the details of the xivorts' schemes and the location of their lair by allying with the wererats or by rescuing the captive xivort. In the latter case, they won't receive a warm welcome from the xivorts, whose lair contains evidence of Toth's involvement but none of the stolen goods.

Tracking down Toth and recovering the stolen items are the final pieces of the puzzle. At first, the gnome tries to trick the characters into leaving. If that gambit fails, he tries to negotiate with them. Although Toth and his servants are reasonably powerful, he's a coward who attacks only as a last resort.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

Margda Silveraxe is looking for help investigating a robbery in her warehouse. The characters might learn about her in various ways.

- ◆ Margda is well known for giving inexperienced adventurers jobs as caravan guards. The characters might approach her looking for such a job.
- ◆ Margda is a respected member of her clan. Her elders, hearing of her troubles, dispatch a dwarf character to help her recover her property.
- ◆ A character could be a relation or friend of one of the other victims. In that case, they hear that the same criminals robbed Margda.

Encounter 1: Meeting Margda

Roleplaying Encounter

Margda runs her business from a nondescript warehouse in the Eastway neighborhood in Baldur's Gate's Lower City. The characters can find her there from sunup to well after sundown barking orders to her workers. She's a gruff, bespectacled, middle-aged dwarf woman who eschews finery for modest work clothes and wears her long, steel-gray hair in a simple braid. After the characters announce themselves, she ushers them into her spare office, asks them to sit, and gets down to business. As she talks, she habitually touches her bare neck as if something is missing.

"Two days ago, I was robbed. The villains broke into my warehouse after my workers went home. Knocked me senseless with this." She produces a small dart from her pocket. "When I came to, I was tied up and my head was covered with a sack. If a Flaming Fist patrol hadn't heard me hollering, I would have laid there all night. The soldiers arrested a couple of neighborhood toughs who were lurking nearby, but those lowlifes didn't have my property."

"I can't abide people stealing from me, and let's face it—the Fist can keep the peace, but they're not detectives. I need folk with good heads on their shoulders to do this for me. I will pay you fifty gold pieces each, plus five percent of the value of whatever you recover for me. What do you say?"

Margda gives the characters a few moments to consider her offer. She expects adventurers to haggle, so if characters succeed at a DC 12 Bluff or Diplomacy check, they can finagle up to an additional 5 percent each out of her. After the characters accept the terms, she pulls a piece of parchment from her desk drawer and continues.

"I didn't think what happened to me was all that odd until a friend told me that in the last tenday, three other merchants in the Lower City were robbed in a similar manner. The thieves snuck into their shops at night, knocked them out, and then ransacked everything of value they could find. What's really odd is that, each time, the Fist arrested some petty criminals but couldn't connect them to the burglaries. Four times in a tenday is quite a coincidence, wouldn't you say?"

Margda hands the parchment over to the nearest character. It lists the names, occupations, and addresses of the three other victims in the order they were robbed.

- ◆ Rhorg Orlusk, Baker, Ten-Sword Alley, Brampton
- ◆ Mira Tully, Apothecary, Trout Run, Eastway
- ◆ Delzour Llaerskyr, Jeweler, Sunrise Avenue, Bloomridge

She also passes the dart around so the characters can examine it. It's very small. A successful DC 19 Nature check reveals that the toxin contains exotic compounds native to the Feywild. Margda honestly answers any questions that the characters might have. Here are some sample questions and her possible responses.

What did the thieves take? *"The thieves must have cased my warehouse, because they knew where I kept all of the expensive stuff. They took a strongbox containing several trade bars, a few bolts of silk, several casks of Amnian wine, and a silver pendant—a family heirloom—from around my neck. Above all, I want that pendant back."*

What does the pendant look like? *"It's a small silver disc set with a chartreuse sphere and engraved with two interlocking rings, the symbol of Berronar Truesilver, on a silver chain. The women of my clan have passed this pendant down to their eldest daughters for generations. I had hoped to give it to my grandniece one day."*

How did the thieves get in? *"They opened a shuttered window in the back of the warehouse. I hadn't barred them yet, but I made sure they were latched, and I have no idea how they opened one from the outside. I was doing inventory and before I knew what was happening, they stung me with that damned dart!"*

The xivorts commanded some rats to open the relatively simple latch from the inside. It's immediately obvious to the characters that it would be very difficult to unlatch a shutter from the outside without damaging it.

Can we see the scene of the crime? *"Certainly."*

Margda escorts the characters through the bustling warehouse and shows them where she was when the dart hit her. She's not shy, so she'll even show them the wound on the back of her thigh if asked. She lets them examine the window. It is a few feet off the ground and wide enough for a human to pass through easily. No other clues are in the warehouse, though characters poking around encounter numerous rats, much to Margda's chagrin. She bawls out one of her workers for not setting enough traps. She has no idea that the rodents acted as the xivorts' accomplices.

Do you have any enemies? *"I'm a merchant in Baldur's Gate, so what do you think? Of course, my enemies know I'd never forgive an assault and they don't have the guts to pull something like this. Not even the Guild. No, I think you're barking up the wrong tree."*

Margda honestly believes this statement. She refuses to pay protection money and until recently has never had any issues with theft.

Stolen Items: The xivorts stole four trade bars (50 gp each), but Toth has already used them to finance his move. They also stole three casks of wine (50 gp each), ten bolts of silk (20 gp each), and her pendant (250 gp).

After the characters finish looking around, Margda sees them out. Before they leave, she warns them

against making trouble for her and asks that they give her periodic updates. Her subsequent attitude toward them depends on how much progress they're making.

Major Quest: Find the Culprits

1st-Level Major Quest (100 XP per character)

The characters earn this quest reward if they expose Toth's scheme and recover Margda's possessions.

Encounter 2: The Investigation Begins

Roleplaying Encounter

After meeting with Margda, the characters have several avenues of investigation to pursue. The clearest place for the characters to start is with interviewing the other victims.

Rhorg Orlusk

The massive Rhorg, an elderly human baker, was the xivorts' first victim. They robbed his shop, which is located in a poorer section of Brampton, six days before Margda Silveraxe's warehouse. It was a dry run for the xivorts, and it almost spun out of control when they took out their hatred of big folks on him and nearly beat him to death. They also vandalized his shop.

The day the characters visit him is also the day he returns to work. Bruises still cover his swollen, unshaven face, he walks with a noticeable limp, and he often winces due to some broken ribs. Although sullen, the baker is willing to talk to the characters. His attitude improves, returning to his normal joviality, as he bakes his bread.

His story is straightforward. He was behind his shop shooing rats away from his morning flour delivery when he heard a whirling noise and something hit him in the head, knocking him down. His assailants then threw a burlap sack over his head and began to

beat him. Before he lost consciousness, he distinctly remembered one of them saying in Elven (he speaks it fluently), “Better stop. Remember what the boss said.” He woke up sometime later after one of his customers found him and summoned the Fist. He thinks they arrested a couple of thugs for the crime.

The thieves stole a small amount of copper and silver coins, several loaves of bread, Rhorg’s gold wedding band, and a set of fine porcelain dishes imported from Shou Lung that once belonged to his deceased wife. The burly widower sheds some tears while recounting that particular loss. Other than the unusual violence, not much else is notable about the crime. No other witnesses or clues are to be found.

A little legwork reveals that Rhorg’s neighbors and customers love him. They can’t believe what happened and urge the characters to help in whatever way they can.

Stolen Inventory: The xivorts stole 10 gp, in addition to the porcelain dishes (100 gp) and a gold wedding ring (50 gp).

Mira Tully

Mira Tully, a skilled young half-elf apothecary, was the xivorts’ second victim. She lives and works in a two-story building near the harbor, which the xivorts robbed four days before Margda Silveraxe’s warehouse. The robbery left Mira angry, paranoid, and scrambling to fill her customers’ orders. When the characters call upon her, she’s frantically brewing new herbal concoctions and hasn’t slept for days. Her silvery hair is disheveled and her blue eyes are sunken and bloodshot.

Although she’s willing to talk, her answers are terse and she’s frequently distracted by her work. As she tells it, she was upstairs reading when she heard a skittering noise from her attic. Then her candle guttered out and her unseen assailants entangled her in a net before covering her head with a burlap sack. One then held a dagger to her throat for several

minutes before leaving. When Mira was sure they were gone, she ran outside and flagged down the closest Fist patrol. Fist agents later caught a couple of teenagers trying to climb the walls of her shop, but let them go after a good flogging made it apparent they hadn’t committed the crime. Mira complains bitterly about the Fist, since they did little else.

The thieves stole two *potions of healing*, several phials of expensive medicine, and her store of rare ingredients, including herbs from Chult that she deems priceless. If the characters ask to see her apartment or attic, Mira insists that she should be working. If they help in her shop for at least an hour or make a DC 12 Diplomacy or Bluff check, she relents. She shows them the apartment but refuses to enter the attic, since “it’s full of rats and bats.” It also contains several clues. The attic window is ajar and opens from the inside (the xivorts had the rats push it open). The robbers left many small, clawed footprints in the dust (a DC 12 Perception check reveals four sets of tracks). A stolen stall-marker chit is on the floor. Such chits are used to allot spaces in the Wide, the sprawling, open-air market in the Upper City (and also the location of the Undercellar’s main entrance).

Stolen Inventory: In addition to the potions, the stolen medicine and herbs are worth 500 gp.

Delzour Llaerskyr

So far, the xivorts’ most successful robbery was their third one, which occurred two days before they broke into Margda Silveraxe’s warehouse. Their target was Delzour Llaerskyr, a human jeweler operating from his luxurious home in Bloomridge, the Lower City’s most upscale neighborhood. Though upset by the thefts, he’s particularly despondent over the death of Whiskers, his beloved cat. The xivorts killed the cat as a favor to their rat allies.

During their interview, the sickly jeweler sits wrapped in a blanket and frequently laments the death of his pet. (“The best friend a man could ever

ask for . . . now the rats will have the run of the place, whatever shall I do?”) His newly hired bodyguard, a grim and silent warrior named Bran, hovers over him and eyes the characters warily.

Llaerskyr relates that he was locking up for the night when he felt a sharp pain in his side, which caused him to faint. He woke to find a burlap sack over his head. He had a dart in his side, and he later found Whiskers’s corpse peppered with the same darts. While grief overwhelms Llaerskyr, Bran produces one of the darts. It’s identical to the one that Margda Silveraxe showed the characters.

Composing himself, Llaerskyr continues. When he awoke, he went outside and yelled for help. A Fist patrol arrested a couple of suspicious local men. Llaerskyr knew they had arrested the wrong people, since everyone from Baldur’s Gate knows it’s extremely unlucky to kill a cat. The thieves were unable to crack his safe, but they did steal several loose gems, a couple of trade bars, and some miscellaneous coins.

If the characters make a DC 12 Insight check during the interview, they realize that Llaerskyr is hiding something. If pressed, he tearfully admits that he expected trouble because he fell behind on his protection payments to the Guild. He also knows the men the Fist arrested were Guild enforcers. Nevertheless, he still harbors doubts about their involvement.

Stolen Inventory: The xivorts stole twenty gems (50 to 100 gp each), two trade bars (50 gp), and 100 gp. Toth has already used half the gems, the trade bars, and coins to finance his move. Ten gems remain (six worth 50 gp and four worth 100 gp).

Minor Quest: Avenge Whiskers

1st-Level Minor Quest (20 XP per character)

Llaerskyr mentions he’d like to see those who tormented his cat “given what they deserve.” The characters earn this quest reward if they slay the xivort darters who killed Whiskers. In addition, if the

characters provide proof of their deed to Llaerskyr, he rewards each of them with a gem (100 gp).

Future Victims

The xivorts' next robbery occurs the same day that Margda Silveraxe hires the characters. That night, the fey break into a warehouse in Bloomridge owned by a portly halfling furrier named Hugo Underbough and steal an entire shipment of fur coats recently arrived from the North. The next morning, if the characters succeed on a DC 8 Streetwise check or talk with any member of the Flaming Fist, they hear of the robbery. Otherwise, Margda informs them that afternoon.

Hugo Underbough's story is similar to the other victims'. His fear is palpable as he retells it and he frequently looks around nervously while wiping his sweaty brow. The caravan bearing the furs arrived late, so he was still at work. A guard was the only other person in the warehouse. Hugo was inspecting the shipment when he heard a strange whirling noise and then a thump. He went to investigate, but quickly hid when he spied several small, shadowy figures roaming through his warehouse. They talked softly among themselves in a language he didn't understand and one of them made a chittering noise that sounded like a rat. If asked to describe them, he gulps loudly, sits down, and confesses that he didn't get a good look at them. He remembers, with a shudder, only their sinister, glowing yellow eyes.

After they left, Underbough found the unconscious guard (who doesn't remember anything) and summoned the Fist, who did nothing but chase away a couple of petty thieves nearby. Only the furs were missing, and if Underbough can't recover them, he's likely to be ruined!

Unless the characters stop them, Underbough isn't the xivorts' last victim. Every few days, the xivorts strike and slowly expand their activities into the Outer City. You can use the *Murder in Baldur's Gate* DM Screen to generate the shop names and services. All

RATS, RATS EVERYWHERE

As the characters investigate the robberies, they might discern patterns involving rats and decide to use some means, such as the *Speak with Nature* ritual, to question them. The rats aren't loyal to the xivorts, though those living in Delzour Llaerskyr's house are grateful the fey dispatched Whiskers. The rats can provide an accurate physical description of the xivorts, but not their motives. The extent of their help involved showing the fey the location of certain objects and people, as well as opening latches.

If the characters do notice the rats, use their presence to increase tension. Since rats are everywhere in Baldur's Gate, their frequent mention should be both appropriate and unnerving.

the victims share similar experiences, which should include clues that help the characters identify the perpetrators or steer the party toward the Undercellar.

Stolen Inventory: The stolen furs are worth 500 gp.

Minor Quest: Return the Prized Possessions

1st-Level Minor Quest (20 XP per character)

The characters earn this quest reward if they return the porcelain dishes to Rhorg Orlusk, the Chult herbs to Mira Tully, or the furs to Hugo Underbough. They earn the XP for each item returned.

The Flaming Fist

The mercenaries who patrol the Lower City are another obvious source of information. Luckily for the characters, none of the Fist soldiers who responded

to the xivorts' robberies have rotated out of Baldur's Gate. The characters can visit the Fist garrisons at the Seatower or Wyrms' Rock and inquire about their current postings. A few hours of inquiries gains the characters the address of a soldier's apartment in Seatower or the name of another's favorite tavern.

The Fist soldiers talk as long as the characters remain respectful and aren't too critical. Most regret being unable to do more, but they had neither the time nor the resources to conduct more than a cursory investigation. Each of their tales is eerily similar.

- ◆ They found few clues at the scene. Other than the victims, there were no witnesses.
- ◆ Within 1-2 hours of the robberies, the Fist apprehended several persons acting suspiciously near the scene of each crime, although some escaped. They all turned out to be career footpads or local delinquents—the soldiers suspect that many were affiliated with the Guild—and each possessed tools of the criminal trade such as crowbars, ropes, lock picks, and concealed blades. Every one of them had an alibi, though, and the Fist couldn't connect them to the thefts. After giving the miscreants a flogging, the Fist mercenaries released them, even though the soldiers felt they were somehow involved.
- ◆ At the time of the robberies, the suspects were patronizing different bathhouses, festhalls, gambling parlors, or taverns. At least one person in each arrested group had visited the Undercellar earlier that night. If asked, the soldiers can provide basic facts about the public face of the Undercellar, but they otherwise don't know much about it. ("That's the Watch's problem" is a common refrain.)
- ◆ They give the characters information on how to find the criminals they detained. This grants the characters a +2 bonus to their Streetwise checks to do so.

Word on the Street

The characters can also turn to the streets for information. If they make a DC 12 Streetwise check, they learn one of the following tidbits. They can attempt these checks multiple times.

- ◆ A bigwig in the Guild has taken an interest in the thefts and provided a list of the stolen items to the city's fences after the third robbery. He's ordered them to report anyone trying to sell things on the list. No one knows how the Guild obtained the list and so far, no one has tried to sell anything on it.
- ◆ A couple of days ago, someone began quietly asking around town about Margda and the characters' investigations. The inquiries seem mostly concerned with what the characters have learned regarding the thefts. No one knows who is making the inquiries—or more precisely, they don't want to know.
- ◆ Hoodlums are killing stray cats at night in the Upper City, especially in the neighborhoods near the Wide, and there's growing anger toward the Watch since they haven't captured the culprits. The killers are brutally stabbing the cats and discarding their corpses on the cobblestones.

The Criminals

After their detention, most of the criminals implicated in the xivorts' crimes melted back into the Gate's underworld, making them nearly impossible to find. Still, a few willing to talk remain.

One of them is a teenage burglar named Coll. His experience soured him on a life of crime, and he is now preparing to leave Baldur's Gate and sail up the River Chionthar to start a new life. Finding him requires a DC 12 Streetwise check. If the characters fail the check, they still obtain the information they need but also attract the attention of six ruffians armed with blackjacks and clubs who don't care for strangers sticking their noses where it doesn't belong. The

| Human Goon | Level 2 Minion Soldier |
|---|-------------------------|
| Medium natural humanoid, human | XP 31 |
| HP 1 ; a missed attack never damages a minion. Initiative +3 AC 15, Fortitude 13, Reflex 11, Will 11 Perception +2 Speed 6 | |
| TRAITS | |
| Mob Rule | |
| While at least two other human goons are within 5 squares of the goon, it gains a +2 power bonus to all defenses. | |
| STANDARD ACTIONS | |
| ⚔ Club (weapon) ♦ At-Will Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC Hit: 5 damage. | |
| Str 14 (+3) | Dex 11 (+1) |
| Con 12 (+2) | Int 9 (+0) |
| | Wis 12 (+2) |
| | Cha 13 (+2) |
| Alignment unaligned | Languages Common |
| Equipment club | |

characters can avoid combat with a DC 19 Bluff check, Diplomacy check, or Intimidate check. If the ruffians attack the characters, they're trying only to scare them (as a DC 8 Insight check reveals); if they reduce a character to 0 hit points, they knock the character unconscious. The ruffians flee after half of them are slain or knocked unconscious. Killing them brings the swift response of the Fist soldiers. It's obvious to the Fist that the ruffians were trying to scare the characters, so, if the characters killed any of them, they'll need to pay some hefty bribes or call upon powerful friends to escape the city's harsh justice.

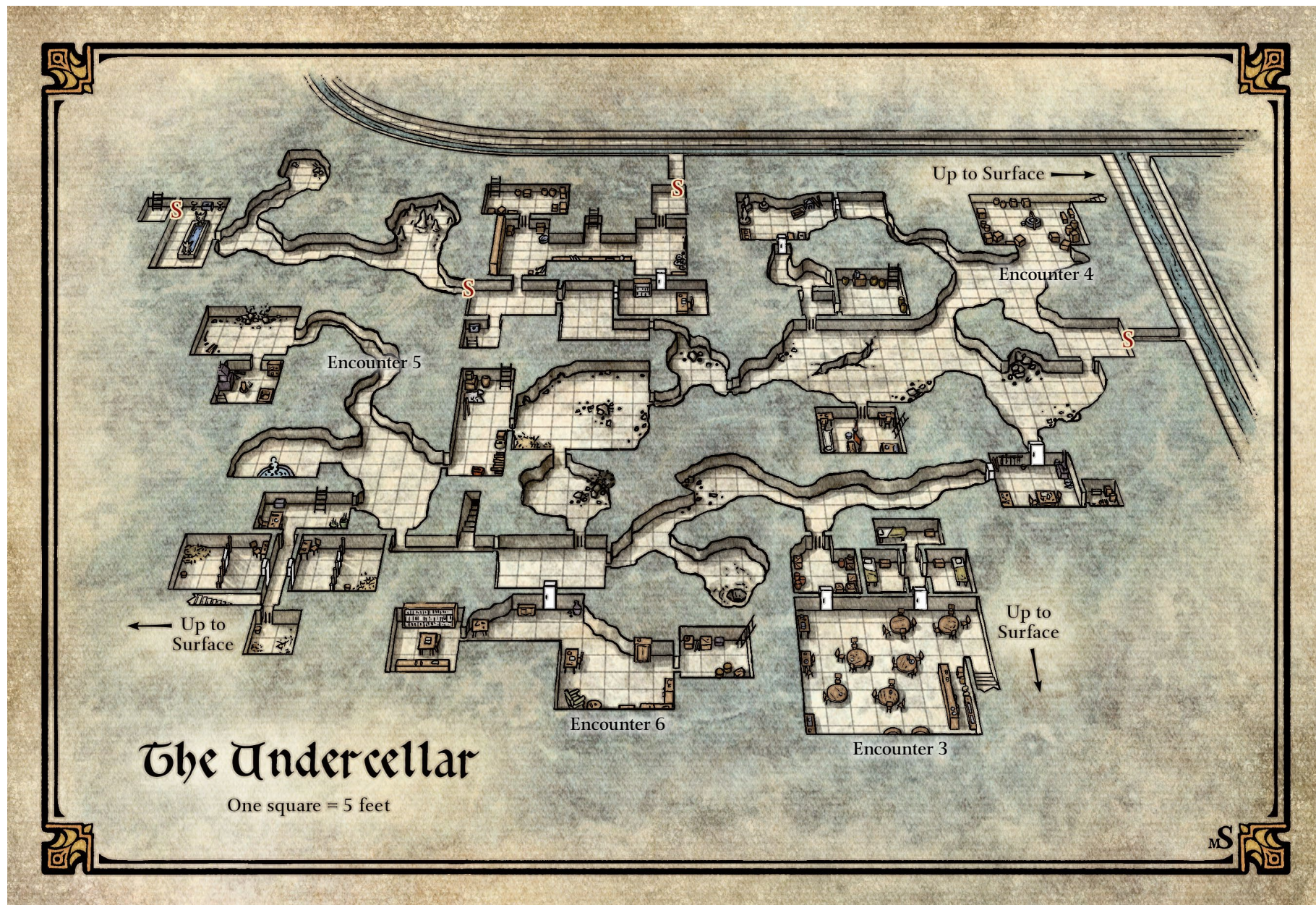
When the characters find Coll—a lanky, barefooted youth with a touse of dirty blond hair and freckles—he's milling around the docks looking for passage on a barge. So far, he hasn't had any success and has caught a cold. He's desperate to leave the Gate, so he'll talk if the characters give him 5 gp and some proper clothing, or if they make a DC 12 Bluff, Diplomacy, or Intimidate check.

Coll tells his story in between coughing and sneezing fits. He's an orphan from the Outer City who supported himself by begging and committing petty crime. Eventually, he attracted the attention of some Guild footpads, who recruited him for his climbing

skills, and he became an accomplished second-story man. Several days ago, a friend nicknamed Magpie enlisted him for a new job: the robbery of Mira Tully's apothecary. The two of them met with a man named Nizgur at the Undercellar to plan the crime. It was supposed to be a simple burglary: Coll and Magpie would climb up to the attic, let themselves in through a window, and then enter Tully's shop to steal a list of items provided to them by Nizgur. (The list included potions, medicines, and herbs, but Coll can't read, so he left those details to Magpie.)

Nothing went according to plan. Coll met Magpie at the appointed time (his friend had been playing dice all night at the Undercellar), but no sooner had they begun to climb the wall of Tully's shop than a patrol of Fist soldiers grabbed them. The soldiers harshly interrogated Coll and his friend for several hours about an earlier robbery at Tully's shop, which seemed to have followed their plan almost exactly. They wisely kept their mouths shut. After the would-be thieves received a flogging, the Fist let them go. The ordeal left Coll shaken and he suspected that Nizgur set him up, so he resolved to leave the Gate and seek his fortune elsewhere. He hasn't seen Nizgur, Magpie, or any other Guild member since.

Coll knows nothing of the xivorts or the other crimes, but if the characters ask him about rats, he sheepishly admits to having fed cheese and a bit of bread to one while planning the robbery. After he has told his story, he takes his leave and continues his search for passage upriver.



Encounter 3: Into the Undercellar

Roleplaying Encounter

The characters' investigation should eventually point them to the Undercellar, a seedy festhall and tavern constructed among the interconnected cellars of the Upper City's buildings. Despite its reputation (or perhaps because of it), the Undercellar is a popular establishment. Visitors to its cobbled, vaulted chambers can enjoy good food, strong drink, games of chance, and the company of "sociable friends," all with an expectation of privacy and far from the prying eyes of the law, since neither the Watch nor the Fist police the Undercellar. Its apparent proprietor—an affable man named Heltur "Ribbons" Ribbond—maintains order with the assistance of a coterie of hired thugs known as "the Cellarers."

That's the public face of the Undercellar. In truth, its extensive maze of tunnels and interconnected chambers sprawls beneath the Upper City, and the Guild controls most of the complex and the dozens of concealed entrances leading into it. In addition, its lack of official oversight has turned it into a haven for the Gate's criminals, since they can safely meet and plot within its walls. Some have even established Guild-approved offices in various private chambers (this is how Rothryn Toth came to live and work there).

The clearly marked public entrance to the Undercellar lies on the southern edge of the Wide, Baldur's Gate's largest and most famous open-air marketplace, at the bottom of a flight of stone steps. Ribbons keeps the heavy oaken doors shut at all hours, but the Undercellar never closes. If the characters knock, one of the Cellarers opens it and ushers them inside.

When the characters first enter, read:

The narrow flight of darkened stairs ends in a spacious, dimly lit common room. A couple of iron braziers and an array of flickering candles provide the scant illumination. Most of the two dozen or so patrons sit around one of the many wooden tables furnishing the room, conversing among themselves in hushed tones as they drink, eat, and gamble, while a pair of professional companions gaily flits about offering their services. A long wooden bar dominates the wall nearest the stairs, and a gaunt, bearded man with a smile plastered on his face stands behind it serving drinks. He greets you with a friendly, "Well met!" Six warriors dressed in leather armor and armed with truncheons stand watch and silently observe the room.

If the characters are visibly armed, two of the guards begin to shadow them from a distance. Otherwise, the Cellarers maintain a hands off approach to security, but react swiftly if a patron becomes excessively rowdy or tries to exit through one of the common room's two other entrances without the proper escort. They beat these unworthies unconscious and then dump them in an unmarked passageway. One of the other entrances leads deeper into the Undercellar, and the other leads to a trio of suites used by the "sociable friends."

The robberies in the Lower City are a hot topic of conversation among the Undercellar's normally tight-lipped patrons and staff, but directly questioning them yields few results. The direct approach doesn't work and invites the Cellarers' wrath if the characters are persistent, but not before they first receive a friendly warning from a smiling Ribbons. The characters can gain information in several other ways, including the following methods.

Eavesdropping: The characters can simply listen to the conversations of the other patrons. A DC 14 Perception check allows them to overhear one item from the rumor list. They must also make a DC 12 Bluff check to conceal their snooping. If they fail, the DC of

subsequent Perception checks increases to 19. Each character can make this check once every 15 minutes.

Making Friends: The characters can loosen the tongues of the other patrons by impressing them with a DC 12 Bluff check, Diplomacy check, or Intimidate check; buying a round of drinks beforehand grants them a +2 bonus to the roll. Afterward, their new friend invites them to sit and divulges one item from the rumor list. Each character can make this check once every 15 minutes.

Gambling: Characters with the necessary funds can join one of the Undercellar's many ongoing games of chance. DMs can have the characters play actual card or dice games, utilize the alternate gambling rules from *Dragon* 398, or simulate the game by wagering on the results of a d6 roll; typical wagers are 1–2 gp each. The other players engage in small talk throughout the games. Every three hands, the characters overhear one item from the rumor list. The characters can stay in the games as long as they have money to bet.

The Rumor List

Recent events dominate the hushed exchanges of the Undercellar's patrons. Here are some snippets of conversations that can provide characters with pertinent information. DMs can roll a d6 or choose from the list.

1. "Did you hear that someone broke into Vug Gorkul's shop and trashed the place? If that half-orc catches whoever did it . . . well, it ain't going to be pretty!" If the characters are in a position to ask, the patron explains that Gorkul is an herbalist who sells medicaments, liqueurs, and poisons from a chamber in the Undercellar. Slyth, the xivort captured by the wererats, vandalized his shop before falling into their clutches.
2. "I hear that the Fetcher is plenty mad about what's happening in the Lower City. Not only is his business

suffering, but his boys keep getting pinched by the Fist.” A DC 12 Streetwise check identifies the Fetcher as a criminal and rumored Guild agent operating out of the Undercellar. He controls a small army of spies and thieves throughout Baldur’s Gate.

3. “Joren and Belken were in here again the other day, asking about the Fetcher’s problems in the Lower City. They give me the creeps. I’m sure they’re somehow involved and trying to stay one step ahead of him.” If the characters inquire about the brothers, they learn that the two are small-time thugs who live in one of the Undercellar’s tunnels. If pressed for details, the patron replies, “They’re an odd pair, kind of funny looking, and they have this weird thing for rats.”
4. “Honor among thieves . . . please. It ain’t safe to talk business with folks anymore. I don’t want anyone stealing my plans and getting rich off my sweat, like what’s happened to the Fetcher.”
5. “Shifty swears he saw a blue demon with glowing eyes down in the tunnels. I told that ninny to sober up.” No one has seen Shifty for a few days. The xivorts killed and ate him after he went looking for the blue demon again.
6. “Ribbons asked me to find him a bunch of cats. The rat problem is getting out of hand again!”

Other Inquiries

While visiting the Undercellar, a few other leads warrant looking into.

Rats: To the chagrin of the proprietor Ribbons, rodents lurk in the common room’s shadows. A successful DC 8 Perception check is all that it takes to find one. After observing the rats, a character who succeeds on a DC 12 Nature check perceives that they’re acting strangely. They approach the patrons too readily and linger far too long. If the characters can find a way to communicate with them, they learn that they’re spying on behalf of their “blue friends.”

Ribbons doesn’t allow rituals or spellcasting in the common room. Characters wishing to use rituals or spells need to leave the premises or rent a private suite (at 5 sp per half hour).

Nizgur: Characters who talked to Coll might want to find his erstwhile employer. Though Nizgur is a regular here and a confidante of the Fetcher, no one has seen him for several days. (The Fetcher exiled him to the Outer City as punishment following the failed Tully robbery.)

A Sit-down with the Fetcher

As the characters finish their investigation in the Undercellar—or if they become frustrated by its pace—a large gang of street urchins bursts through the door that leads deeper into the complex. The urchins approach the characters and demand they follow them since “the boss wants to talk to you.” If asked, they reply that their boss is the Fetcher. Although the glowering, knife-wielding youths appear threatening, the characters can decline their invitation without further incident. If they accept, the urchins guide them through the Undercellar’s twisting tunnels (passing Toth’s laboratory) to the Fetcher’s richly appointed office.

When the characters enter the office, read:

An obese, middle-aged man clasping a crystal goblet of red wine in his huge hand sits in a plush chair behind a large cedar desk. A drooping walrus mustache hangs beneath his beaky nose. Dark, messy curls cover half his scalp and an old burn scar covers the rest. Though he wears fine clothes, they’re rumpled and sweat-stained. He rises from his chair with the help of an ornate walking stick and greets you with a jovial smile. “My name is Osgur Hallorn, but most call me the Fetcher. I hear we have some mutual interests that I thought we should discuss. Come, sit.”

The Fetcher flops back into his chair, which creaks under his weight. You hear several meows; a dozen or so

cats perch above you on an unlit lamp wheel. One large calico jumps into the Fetcher’s lap and purrs contentedly.

A few urchins linger. When the characters have taken their seats, Fetcher offers them wine. He maintains a friendly demeanor and gets down to business:

“I’ve heard that you’ve been looking into some unfortunate events in the Lower City. Well, I’d like to help you in any way that I can. Why? Well, the Fist has mistakenly blamed some of my boys for those crimes and I can’t in good conscience keep letting that happen to innocent youths, can I?”

The Fetcher steadfastly denies that his boys were planning to rob anyone, unconvincingly insists their arrests were simple coincidences, and doesn’t particularly care if the characters believe him. He wants to hear what they’ve learned during their investigations. Since he doesn’t expect the characters to trust him, he’s not offended if they withhold information or mislead him. Though he’s unaware of Toth’s schemes (at this point, he barely remembers the gnome), the Fetcher suspects that the leak originates from within the Guild and wants the characters to investigate certain leads that he has judged too risky to pursue himself: specifically, the wererat twins Joren and Belken. He knows that they’ve also been investigating the crimes, though he’s not sure why. Yesterday, one of his boys reported that the wererats tried to bribe him with one of Delzour Llaeskyr’s stolen gems (which they took from Slyth).

When characters finish, the Fetcher says more:

“I think I can help you. You might have heard about some twin brothers who live down here; their names are Joren and Belken. Well, they’re little more than street thugs, but they’ve been nosing around too, though not as deftly as you. One of my boys told me that they tried to bribe him yesterday with a ruby! I’m sure they just didn’t find it lying on the flagstones down here.”

The Fetcher hides the fact that the twins are lycanthropes (a DC 19 Insight check reveals he's hiding something). He tells them how to reach the twins' hideout and promises that no one will interfere with their investigation. The characters can leave at any time. As they go, the Fetcher reminds them that they can always call upon him for help, raises his glass, and toasts to their success with a hearty laugh.

Encounter 4: The Warrens

Roleplaying Challenge or Combat Encounter
Level 3 (700 XP)

By the time the characters finish dealing with the Undercellar's denizens, they'll likely want to talk with Joren and Belken. The identical twins work as enforcers, though only the Fetcher knows what they actually are. As payment, the Guild allows them to live in a secluded chamber in the Undercellar. The characters can find it easily by following the Fetcher's instructions. If the characters declined his help, the Undercellar's other inhabitants can give them directions, and Ribbons grants them admission with a wry smile. (Everyone hates them and would reveal their location out of spite, but the Fetcher put out word to help the characters in this regard.)

The twins' interest in the robberies is motivated by their hatred of the xivorts. The wererats are the self-proclaimed rulers of the Undercellar's rat population, and they view the fey as threats to their authority. They know someone is onto their scheme and are trying to find out whom before they strike back. To that end, they recently captured a xivort named Slyth, who had earlier vandalized Vug Gorkul's neighboring shop. They've been torturing the xivort ever since.

Light: Bright (torches in brackets).

Monsters: 2 scurrying wererats, 4 dire rats, 1 xivort slasher.

Perception DC 14 (as the characters approach the chamber): *You hear a high-pitched squeaky voice cry out, "Who hired you!" in Common; the voice echoes strangely.*

When the characters enter the lair, read:

Gnawed wooden crates and pallets of dirty straw fill this chamber. At its center is a well surrounded by a crumbling stone wall. A flight of stairs leads upward to a wooden door.

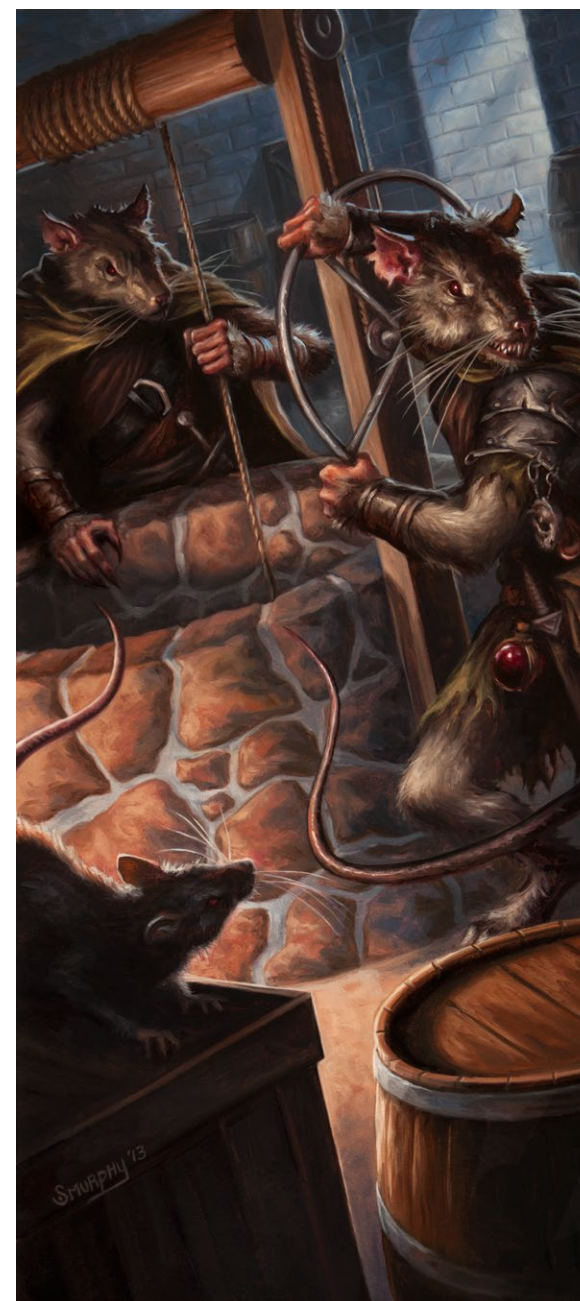
When the characters enter, Joren and Belken are standing in their hybrid forms next to the well, while the dire rats peer hungrily over its edge. They've imprisoned Slyth at the well's bottom and are in the process of interrogating him. When they notice the characters, the wererats spin around and hiss menacingly but don't attack immediately. The commotion prompts Slyth to begin screaming "Help!" in Common and Elven. Joren steps forward and orders the characters to leave. Unless the characters comply or come up with a good reason to stay, the wererats attack. They concentrate on driving the characters away and don't pursue them if the characters retreat.

Crates: The crates are difficult terrain and grant cover.

Stairs: The stairs are difficult terrain. The door at the top of the landing is locked (DC 19 Thievery to open) and Belken carries the key in his pocket. It leads to a warehouse owned by the Guild.

Well: The crude masonry encircling the dry well is 3 feet high. The shaft is 30 feet deep, and creatures falling into it take 3d10 damage. Climbing the well requires a DC 15 Athletics check. The winch still works and can support approximately 50 pounds.

Treasure: The twins keep their treasure hidden in one of the crates. It consists of 100 gp in assorted coinage, a level 2 magic item coated in grime, and Slyth's possessions, which include four daggers, a short sword, and a pouch containing three gems stolen from Delzour Llaerskyr worth 50 gp each



(among them is a fire spinel that the Fetcher's man mistook for a ruby).

Development: If the characters think fast and make a DC 12 Bluff check, Diplomacy check, or Intimidate check, they can forestall the wererats' attack; if they mention they're working for the Fetcher or are investigating the xivorts' robberies, they gain a +2 bonus to their roll. After the characters convince them that they're on the same side, the wererats assume their human forms—short, ugly men with beady eyes, dark, oily hair, and thin mustaches—while the disappointed dire rats return to gazing longingly down the well.

The jittery twins finish each other's sentences as they explain that they are looking for allies to help them fight the xivorts (or as they angrily call the fey, "the usurpers"). They've pieced together the xivorts' scheme and can fill the characters in on any remaining details. They also know the location of the xivorts' lair. The only thing that they haven't figured out is who hired them, which is why they're interrogating Slyth—without much success. Based on their observations, they're convinced the xivorts' boss is another Undercellar inhabitant. They refuse to accompany the characters until they learn the mastermind's identity (they don't want to cross the wrong person).

If the characters ask to talk to Slyth, the wererats oblige, though they refuse to release him (they plan to eat the xivort for his impudence). The miserable fey is wracked by filth fever, hunger, and thirst, but he refuses to cooperate. When he does respond to questions, his answers are laced with obscenities, threats, or demands for his release. In truth he knows little more than the twins, though he has seen "the boss" (as the xivorts call him) and describes him as "a big folk like you, but with red hair." He also knows that the xivorts don't keep the loot in their lair; instead, "the boss" meets them each morning at the entrance to their home and exchanges any stolen items for gold trade bars.

| 2 Scurrying Wererats | Level 3 Skirmisher |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| Medium natural humanoid (shapechanger), human XP 150 each | |
| HP 37; Bloodied 18 | Initiative +7 |
| AC 17, Fortitude 16, Reflex 14, Will 13 | Perception +7 |
| Speed 6, climb 4 (rat or hybrid form only) | Low-light vision |
| TRAITS | |
| Regeneration | |
| The wererat regains 5 hit points whenever it starts its turn and has at least 1 hit point. When the wererat takes damage from a silvered weapon, its regeneration does not function on its next turn. | |
| STANDARD ACTIONS | |
| ⚔ Dagger (weapon) ♦ At-Will | |
| Requirement: The wererat must be in human or hybrid form. | |
| Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC | |
| Hit: 1d6 + 6 damage, or 2d6 + 6 if the wererat has combat advantage against the target. | |
| ⚔ Bite (disease) ♦ At-Will | |
| Requirement: The wererat must be in rat or hybrid form. | |
| Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC | |
| Hit: 1d4 + 4 damage. If the target is granting combat advantage to the wererat, it also takes ongoing 5 damage (save ends). At the end of the encounter, the target makes a saving throw. On a failure, the target contracts wererat filth fever (stage 1). | |
| MOVE ACTIONS | |
| Rat Scurry ♦ At-Will | |
| Requirement: The wererat must be in rat form. | |
| Effect: The wererat shifts up to its speed. | |
| MINOR ACTIONS | |
| Change Shape (polymorph) ♦ At-Will | |
| Effect: The wererat alters its physical form to appear as a Tiny rat, or a Medium unique human or hybrid. | |
| Skills Bluff +6, Stealth +10 | |
| Str 10 (+1) | Dex 18 (+5) Wis 12 (+2) |
| Con 15 (+3) | Int 13 (+2) Cha 11 (+1) |
| Alignment evil Languages Common | |
| Equipment dagger | |

If the characters slay the twins, Slyth can provide the same information, though he first expects his rescuers to bind his wounds, provide him with medicine, and give him food. The duplicitous fey claims that "the boss" tricked his desperate and hungry people into stealing for him. If any characters are aware of the

| Wererat Filth Fever | Level 3 Disease |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| <i>Those infected by this disease waste away as they alternately suffer chills and hot flashes.</i> | |
| Stage 0: The target recovers from the disease. | |
| Stage 1: While affected by stage 1, the target loses a healing surge. | |
| Stage 2: While affected by stage 2, the target loses a healing surge. The target also takes a -2 penalty to AC, Fortitude, and Reflex. | |
| Stage 3: While affected by stage 3, the target loses all healing surges and cannot regain hit points. The target also takes a -2 penalty to AC, Fortitude, and Reflex. | |
| Check: At the end of each extended rest, the target makes an Endurance check if it is at stage 1 or 2. | |
| 8 or Lower: The stage of the disease increases by 1. | |
| 9-12: No change. | |
| 13 or Higher: The stage of the disease decreases by 1. | |
| 4 Dire Rats | Level 1 Brute |
| Small natural beast | |
| XP 100 each | |
| HP 38; Bloodied 19 | Initiative +2 |
| AC 13, Fortitude 13, Reflex 11, Will 9 | Perception +5 |
| Speed 6, climb 3 | Low-light vision |
| STANDARD ACTIONS | |
| ⚔ Bite (disease) ♦ At-Will | |
| Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC | |
| Hit: 1d10 + 5 damage. At the end of the encounter, the target makes a saving throw. On a failure, the target contracts dire rat filth fever (stage 1). | |
| Skills Stealth +7 | |
| Str 14 (+2) | Dex 15 (+2) Wis 10 (+0) |
| Con 18 (+4) | Int 2 (-4) Cha 6 (-2) |
| Alignment unaligned Languages — | |

xivorts' tragic history, he plays on their sympathies. He now wants nothing more than to go home. Slyth offers to guide the characters to his people's lair so they can discuss matters with Savax, their leader. Naturally, he turns on them at the earliest opportunity.

Dire Rat Filth Fever Level 1 Disease

Those infected by this disease waste away as they alternately suffer chills and hot flashes.

Stage 0: The target recovers from the disease.

Stage 1: While affected by stage 1, the target loses a healing surge.

Stage 2: While affected by stage 2, the target loses a healing surge. The target also takes a -2 penalty to AC, Fortitude, and Reflex.

Stage 3: While affected by stage 3, the target loses all healing surges and cannot regain hit points. The target also takes a -2 penalty to AC, Fortitude, and Reflex.

Check: At the end of each extended rest, the target makes an Endurance check if it is at stage 1 or 2.

7 or Lower: The stage of the disease increases by 1.

8-11: No change.

12 or Higher: The stage of the disease decreases by 1.

Xivort Slasher Level 1 Skirmisher
Small fey humanoid XP 100

HP 26; Bloodied 13 Initiative +4
AC 15, Fortitude 12, Reflex 13, Will 13 Perception +1
Speed 5 Darkvision

STANDARD ACTIONS⚔ **Short Sword** (weapon) ♦ **At-Will**

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC
Hit: 1d6 + 5 damage.

☞ **Dagger** (weapon) ♦ **At-Will**

Attack: Ranged 5/10 (one creature); +6 vs. AC
Hit: 1d4 + 3 damage.

TRIGGERED ACTIONS**Cunning Step** ♦ **At-Will**

Trigger: An enemy adjacent to the slasher is hit by an attack.

Effect (Free Action): The slasher shifts 1 square.

Shadow Step (teleportation) ♦ **At-Will**

Trigger: An enemy adjacent to the slasher hits it.

Effect (Immediate Reaction): The slasher teleports to another square adjacent to the triggering enemy.

Skills Bluff +5, Stealth +7

Str 13 (+1) **Dex** 14 (+2) **Wis** 12 (+1)

Con 10 (+0) **Int** 10 (+0) **Cha** 11 (+0)

Alignment evil **Languages** Common, Elven

Equipment leather armor, short sword, 4 daggers

Encounter 5: The Darkest Reaches

Combat Encounter Level 4 (925 XP)

After Toth hired the xivorts, they entered the Undercellar through a fissure that connects the complex to the Underdark and made the chamber they found their lair. Savax, the band's shadow caller and leader, used magic to make it feel more like home.

Light: None.

Monsters: 3 xivort darters, 2 xivort net casters, 2 xivort slashers, and 1 xivort shadow caller.

When the characters approach the lair, read:

The rough-hewn tunnel appears unnaturally dark.

Shadows seem to cling to everything and the dank air is noticeably cooler. Even in the dim light, you can see that rubble and garbage chokes the passageway.

Except for Toth, the xivorts haven't had any visitors and aren't expecting trouble, but they still post guards. Two xivort darters hide 20 feet up the tunnel. If they detect the characters (the darters do so automatically if the characters carry a light source), they begin to hurl darts (likely with surprise) and shout an alarm before retreating deeper into tunnel.

Tactics: The xivorts attempt to trap the characters in the tunnel and employ ranged attacks against them. The net casters use their bolas to knock down the front ranks so the characters can't provide cover to their allies. Outside the tunnel, the xivorts use hit-and-run tactics, focus on disabling the characters, and take advantage of the favorable lighting conditions. Since they particularly hate goliaths and half-orcs, they try to attack members of those races first. If the characters retreat, the xivorts pursue them into the adjacent chambers but no farther. The xivorts fight as long as Savax lives. If he is killed, they try to flee back to the Underdark.

3 Xivort Darters Level 1 Artillery

Small fey humanoid XP 100 each

HP 22; Bloodied 11 Initiative +2
AC 13, Fortitude 12, Reflex 13, Will 13 Perception +1
Speed 5 Darkvision

STANDARD ACTIONS⚔ **Dagger** (weapon) ♦ **At-Will**

Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC
Hit: 1d4 + 3 damage.

☞ **Dart** (weapon) ♦ **At-Will**

Attack: Ranged 5/10 (one creature); +6 vs. Reflex
Hit: 1d4 + 3 damage.

☞ **Dart Volley** (weapon) ♦ **At-Will**

Effect: The darter uses dart twice.

☞ **Dream Venom Dart** (poison, weapon) ♦ **Encounter**

Attack: Ranged 5/10 (one creature); +6 vs. Reflex
Hit: 1d4 + 3 damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).

TRIGGERED ACTIONS**Darter's Step** (teleportation) ♦ **At-Will**

Trigger: An enemy adjacent to the darter hits it.

Effect (Immediate Reaction): The darter teleports 2 squares.

Str 13 (+1) **Dex** 14 (+2) **Wis** 12 (+1)
Con 10 (+0) **Int** 10 (+0) **Cha** 11 (+0)

Alignment evil

Languages Common, Elven

Equipment dagger, 4 darts

Reinforcements: After the darters raise the alarm, Savax emits a piercing, high-pitched squeaking noise as a free action, which summons a scurrying rat swarm. The rodents appear at the beginning of the next round at the mouth of the tunnel and fight to the death or until Savax is slain. In addition, if Slyth accompanies the characters, he immediately turns on them.

Coal Bin: The empty coal bin provides cover to anyone inside it.

Fissure: Medium creatures need to squeeze to pass through the fissure, which descends 30 feet to a natural tunnel beneath the Undercellar. The tunnel leads farther into the Underdark.

Furniture: If a creature that can't see enters a square containing furniture, it falls prone. The xivorts can make DC 8 Strength checks as minor actions to shove the furniture into an adjacent square.

| 2 Xivort Net Casters | Level 1 Controller |
|--|----------------------|
| Small fey humanoid | XP 100 each |
| HP 26; Bloodied 13 | Initiative +3 |
| AC 15, Fortitude 12, Reflex 13, Will 13 | Perception +1 |
| Speed 5 | Darkvision |
| TRAITS | |
| Cruel Slasher | |
| The net caster gains a +2 bonus to damage rolls against prone, immobilized, slowed, or restrained enemies. | |
| STANDARD ACTIONS | |
| ⚔ Short Sword (weapon) ♦ At-Will | |
| Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC | |
| Hit: 1d6 + 5 damage. | |
| ☞ Net (weapon) ♦ At-Will | |
| Attack: Area burst 1 within 5 (creatures in the burst); +5 vs. Reflex | |
| Hit: The target is restrained (save ends). | |
| MINOR ACTIONS | |
| ☞ Bolas (weapon) ♦ At-Will | |
| Attack: Ranged 5 (one creature); +5 vs. Reflex | |
| Hit: The target falls prone and cannot stand up until the end of the net caster's next turn. | |
| TRIGGERED ACTIONS | |
| Shadow Step (teleportation) ♦ At-Will | |
| Trigger: An enemy adjacent to the net caster hits it. | |
| Effect (Immediate Reaction): The net caster teleports to another square adjacent to the triggering enemy. | |
| Str 13 (+1) | Dex 16 (+3) |
| Con 10 (+0) | Int 10 (+0) |
| Wis 12 (+1) | Cha 11 (+0) |
| Alignment evil | |
| Languages Common, Elven | |
| Equipment leather armor, short sword, 2 bolas, 4 nets | |

Rubble: The rubble is difficult terrain. If a creature that can't see the rubble enters its square, it must make a DC 12 Acrobatics roll or fall prone.

Tunnel: Medium creatures need to squeeze when moving through the tunnel.

Unnatural Darkness: Within the tunnel and the two chambers occupied by the xivorts, bright light becomes dim light, and dim lights are extinguished. Additionally, the radiuses of any light sources are halved.

Upstairs: The ladder in the smaller chamber leads to the first floor of a house in the Upper City.

| 2 Xivort Slashers | Level 1 Skirmisher |
|--|----------------------|
| Small fey humanoid | XP 100 each |
| HP 26; Bloodied 13 | Initiative +4 |
| AC 15, Fortitude 12, Reflex 13, Will 13 | Perception +1 |
| Speed 5 | Darkvision |
| STANDARD ACTIONS | |
| ⚔ Short Sword (weapon) ♦ At-Will | |
| Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC | |
| Hit: 1d6 + 5 damage. | |
| ☞ Dagger (weapon) ♦ At-Will | |
| Attack: Ranged 5/10 (one creature); +6 vs. AC | |
| Hit: 1d4 + 3 damage. | |
| TRIGGERED ACTIONS | |
| Cunning Step ♦ At-Will | |
| Trigger: An enemy adjacent to the slasher is hit by an attack. | |
| Effect (Free Action): The slasher shifts 1 square. | |
| Shadow Step (teleportation) ♦ At-Will | |
| Trigger: An enemy adjacent to the slasher hits it. | |
| Effect (Immediate Reaction): The slasher teleports to another square adjacent to the triggering enemy. | |
| Skills Bluff +5, Stealth +7 | |
| Str 13 (+1) | Dex 14 (+2) |
| Con 10 (+0) | Int 10 (+0) |
| Wis 12 (+1) | Cha 11 (+0) |
| Alignment evil | |
| Languages Common, Elven | |
| Equipment leather armor, short sword, 4 daggers | |

Its new owners are renovating it, so during the day, workers are busy in the house. Savax's magic has convinced the workers that the cellar is haunted, so they avoid it at all costs. At night, the house is unoccupied, allowing the xivorts easy access to the city.

Treasure: Each xivort carries 1d10 sp and 1d6 gp. Savax also wears a silver circlet in the shape of bat with outstretched wings worth 75 gp and carries a *bag of holding* that Toth loaned to them so they could transport bulky loot. In addition, the shadow caller has tucked a bronze amulet (worth 5 gp) and a letter written by Toth in Elven into his belt pouch. It reads:

"Savax, use this amulet to control the magens. I will show you how when the first batch is ready for delivery in less than a tenday, but for now attune yourself to it. –Toth"

| Xivort Shadow Caller | Level 2 Artillery (Leader) |
|---|----------------------------|
| Small fey humanoid | XP 125 |
| HP 32; Bloodied 16 | Initiative +2 |
| AC 14, Fortitude 14, Reflex 14, Will 13 | Perception +5 |
| Speed 5 | Darkvision |
| STANDARD ACTIONS | |
| ⚔ Dagger (weapon) ♦ At-Will | |
| Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +7 vs. AC | |
| Hit: 1d4 + 4 damage. | |
| ☞ Shadow Phantoms (fear, implement, psychic) ♦ At-Will | |
| Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +7 vs. Will, with a +1 bonus per creature adjacent to the target | |
| Hit: 1d8 + 4 psychic damage, and the target grants combat advantage until the end of the shadow caller's next turn. | |
| ☞ Deathmark Bolt (implement, necrotic) ♦ Recharge ☞ ☞ | |
| Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +7 vs. Will | |
| Hit: 1d8 + 4 necrotic damage, and one of the shadow caller's allies adjacent to the target can make a melee basic attack against the target as a free action. | |
| ☞ Shadow Strangler (implement) ♦ Encounter | |
| Attack: Ranged 10 (one creature); +7 vs. Reflex | |
| Hit: The target is immobilized and takes ongoing 5 damage (save ends both). | |
| TRIGGERED ACTIONS | |
| Shadow Step (teleportation) ♦ At-Will | |
| Trigger: An enemy adjacent to the shadow caller hits it. | |
| Effect (Immediate Reaction): The shadow caller teleports to another square adjacent to the triggering enemy. | |
| Str 11 (+1) | Dex 14 (+3) |
| Con 14 (+3) | Int 17 (+4) |
| Wis 11 (+1) | Cha 16 (+4) |
| Alignment evil | |
| Languages Common, Elven | |
| Equipment dagger, wand | |

The amulet is powerless, but Toth enchanted it so it radiates a magical aura.

The xivorts store their profits in the empty coal bin. They've wrapped what appears to be ten golden trade bars in dirty cloth. The bars are actually iron ingots; a character examining the "trade bars" with a passive Insight check of 19 or higher notices something is amiss. It requires a DC 19 Insight check as a minor action to disbelieve the illusion.

Development: Captured xivorts aren't cooperative until the characters discover the truth about their

| Scurrying Rat Swarm | Level 1 Skirmisher |
|--|----------------------|
| Medium natural beast (swarm) | XP 100 |
| HP 27; Bloodied 13 | Initiative +5 |
| AC 15, Fortitude 13, Reflex 15, Will 11 | Perception +4 |
| Speed 6, climb 2 | Low-light vision |
| Resist half damage from melee and ranged attacks; | |
| Vulnerable 5 to close and area attacks | |
| TRAITS | |
| ☼ Swarm Attack ♦ Aura 1 | |
| Any enemy that ends its turn in the aura takes 4 damage, and the swarm can slide it 1 square as a free action. | |
| Swarm | |
| The swarm can occupy the same space as another creature, and an enemy can enter its space, which is difficult terrain. The swarm cannot be pulled, pushed, or slid by melee or ranged attacks. It can squeeze through any opening that is large enough for at least one of the creatures it comprises. | |
| STANDARD ACTIONS | |
| ⚔ Swarm of Teeth ♦ At-Will | |
| Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +6 vs. AC | |
| Hit: 1d10 + 3 damage, or 1d10 + 8 if the swarm moved at least 2 squares during this turn. | |
| Effect: The swarm can shift 1 square. | |
| Str 12 (+1) | Dex 16 (+3) |
| Con 11 (+0) | Int 1 (-5) |
| Wis 9 (-1) | Cha 7 (-2) |
| Alignment unaligned Languages — | |

“trade bars.” After the illusion is broken, the xivorts howl in anger (their shrieks grow louder when they realize that their army of magens was also a lie) and vow revenge against Toth. Only Savax knows Toth’s actual name. The xivorts reveal the location of their boss’s laboratory if the characters allow them to return to the Underdark. None of them knows he’s a gnome, since they’ve seen him only in his human guise.

If no xivorts survived, the characters can call upon the other inhabitants of the Undercellar for information. When presented with the illusory gold or Savax’s note, the Undercellar’s patrons quickly identify Rothryn Toth as the most likely culprit. They know him as a redheaded gnome instead of a human and provide the characters with directions to his chambers (they also warn that he’s a powerful wizard). The Fetcher even offers to take care of things for the

characters with the intent of collecting the stolen goods for himself, but he defers to the characters if they wish to pursue the matter to its conclusion.

Killing or driving off the xivorts ends the crime spree and encourages Toth to flee Baldur’s Gate.

Encounter 6: One Last Rat

Roleplaying Challenge, Combat Encounter Level 2 (650 XP), and Trap/Hazard (125 XP)

By the time the characters decide to confront Rothryn Toth, he has already heard about what happened to his xivort allies (word travels fast in the Undercellar) and is hastily preparing his getaway. Toth is not evil, but he is incredibly self-interested and cowardly. Simply killing the characters is unappealing. Instead, he first tries trickery, then bribery, and only turns violent as a last-ditch effort (or if the characters attack him).

Toth occupies a trio of interconnected chambers in the Undercellar, which he uses as a workshop, study, and library. He also rents the house above. He has placed an arcane lock effect on the otherwise-unremarkable reinforced wooden door that connects his chambers to the Undercellar (DC 22 Thievery or Strength check to open); it has AC 5, Fortitude 10, and 30 hit points. In addition, if anyone other than Toth touches the door, a magic mouth activates and in an apologetic voice loudly announces, “Mr. Toth is out at the moment. Please come back later. I’m very sorry for your inconvenience.” Characters who listen at the door and make a DC 13 Perception check can hear the muffled sounds of people moving around; however, no one ever answers the door.

Light: Bright (floating globes of magical light provide illumination; Toth can extinguish them as a free action).

Monsters: 1 gnome illusionist, 1 pseudodragon, 2 demos magen sentinels.

Trap/Hazard: 1 glyph of warding.

| Gnome Illusionist | Level 6 Artillery |
|---|----------------------|
| Small fey humanoid | XP 250 |
| HP 57; Bloodied 28 | Initiative +5 |
| AC 20, Fortitude 15, Reflex 17, Will 18 | Perception +4 |
| Speed 5 | Low-light vision |
| STANDARD ACTIONS | |
| ⚔ Gnarled Staff (weapon) ♦ At-Will | |
| Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +11 vs. AC | |
| Hit: 1d8 + 6 damage. | |
| ✳ Bedazzle (illusion, implement, radiant) ♦ At-Will | |
| Attack: Area burst 1 within 10 (enemies in the burst); +11 vs. Will | |
| Hit: 2d6 + 5 radiant damage, and the target grants combat advantage (save ends). | |
| ◀ See Me Not (illusion, implement, psychic) ♦ | |
| Recharge ☞ ☞ ☞ | |
| Attack: Close blast 3 (enemies in the blast); +9 vs. Will | |
| Hit: 2d6 + 10 psychic damage, and the target cannot see the gnome (save ends). | |
| MOVE ACTIONS | |
| There, Not There (illusion, teleportation) ♦ Encounter | |
| Effect: The gnome teleports up to 5 squares and creates two duplicates of itself within 5 squares of its destination space. The duplicates last until the gnome attacks or until they are destroyed. Each duplicate has 1 hit point and the same ability scores and defenses as the gnome. The gnome can use its actions to have a duplicate act in any way it could, except that the duplicates cannot use powers and cannot flank. | |
| MINOR ACTIONS | |
| Veil (illusion) ♦ At-Will | |
| Effect: The gnome can disguise itself and up to three allies within 5 squares of it to appear as any Small or Medium creatures. A creature can see through the disguise with a successful Insight check opposed by the gnome’s Bluff check. | |
| Skills Bluff +13, Stealth +12 | |
| Str 10 (+3) | Dex 14 (+5) |
| Con 15 (+5) | Int 18 (+7) |
| | Wis 13 (+4) |
| | Cha 20 (+8) |
| Alignment unaligned Languages Common, Elven | |
| Equipment robes, gnarled staff (quarterstaff) | |

| Pseudodragon | Level 3 Lurker |
|---|-----------------------|
| Small natural beast (reptile) | XP 150 |
| HP 40; Bloodied 20 | Initiative +9 |
| AC 17, Fortitude 14, Reflex 15, Will 14 | Perception +8 |
| Speed 4, fly 8 (hover) | |
| STANDARD ACTIONS | |
| ⚔ Bite ♦ At-Will | |
| Attack: Melee 1 (one creature); +8 vs. AC | |
| Hit: 1d8 + 4 damage. | |
| Effect: The pseudodragon flies up to 4 squares. This movement does not provoke opportunity attacks. | |
| ⚔ Sting (poison) ♦ At-Will | |
| Attack: Melee 1 (one creature that cannot see the pseudodragon); +6 vs. Fortitude | |
| Hit: 1d8 + 4 damage, and ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends). | |
| Invisibility (illusion) ♦ Recharge when the pseudodragon takes damage | |
| Effect: The pseudodragon becomes invisible until it hits or misses with an attack. | |
| Skills Insight +8, Stealth +10 | |
| Str 8 (+0) | Dex 18 (+5) |
| Con 16 (+4) | Int 9 (+0) |
| | Wis 15 (+3) |
| | Cha 17 (+4) |
| Alignment unaligned Languages Common, Draconic | |

When the characters open the door, read:

The door opens into a large, irregularly shaped room, sparsely furnished with a mismatched collection of trunks, tables, and a battered wooden cabinet. A desk pushed up against one of the walls has a thick book lying open atop it. Next to the desk is a plush chair covered with brightly colored pillows. An open door is to your right, through which you can see what appears to be a library. Several small crates sit atop a reading table, half-filled with books.

Passive Insight of 22 or higher: The wall to your left seems to waver for an instant.

Any character who notices something is wrong with the wall can make a DC 22 Insight check as a minor action to disbelieve the illusion.

| 2 Demos Magen Sentinels | Level 2 Soldier |
|--|------------------------|
| Medium natural animate (construct) | XP 125 each |
| HP 38; Bloodied 19 | Initiative +5 |
| AC 18, Fortitude 15, Reflex 13, Will 14 | Perception +8 |
| Speed 5 | |
| Immune charm, disease, fear, poison | |
| TRAITS | |
| Threatening Reach | |
| The sentinel can make opportunity attacks against enemies within its reach. | |
| STANDARD ACTIONS | |
| ⚔ Halberd (weapon) ♦ At-Will | |
| Attack: Melee 2 (one creature); +7 vs. AC | |
| Hit: 1d10 + 5 damage. | |
| Effect: The sentinel marks the target until the end of its next turn. | |
| ⚔ Sweeping Cut (weapon) ♦ Recharge when first bloodied | |
| Attack: Close burst 1 (enemies in the burst); +7 vs. AC | |
| Hit: 1d10 + 5 damage, and the target falls prone. | |
| TRIGGERED ACTIONS | |
| ⚔ Ever Vigilant (weapon) ♦ At-Will | |
| Trigger: An enemy marked by the sentinel makes an attack that doesn't include the sentinel as a target. | |
| Effect (Immediate Interrupt): The sentinel uses <i>halberd</i> against the triggering enemy. If the triggering attack targeted its controller, the sentinel gains a +2 power bonus to its attack roll and damage roll for this attack. | |
| Magic Absorption ♦ Encounter | |
| Trigger: An arcane attack hits the sentinel. | |
| Effect (Immediate Reaction): The sentinel gains 10 temporary hit points. | |
| Skills Athletics +9 | |
| Str 17 (+4) | Dex 14 (+3) |
| Con 14 (+3) | Int 9 (+0) |
| | Wis 15 (+3) |
| | Cha 10 (+1) |
| Alignment unaligned Languages Common | |
| Equipment scale armor, halberd | |

If a character disbelieves the illusion, read:

The wall dissolves. In its place is an open archway leading to a small room filled with stacks of boxes and crates. A ladder ascends above the clutter to a trapdoor in the ceiling.

Toth uses his *veil* power to disguise himself and his recently purchased demos magen sentinels. Wasp, his pet pseudodragon, perches invisibly on the back

| Glyph of Warding | Level 2 Trap |
|---|---------------------|
| Object | XP 125 |
| Detect Arcana or Perception DC 15 | Initiative – |
| Immune attacks | |
| TRIGGERED ACTIONS | |
| ⚔ Attack (radiant) | |
| Trigger: A creature touches the object bearing the glyph. | |
| Attack (Immediate Reaction): Close burst 3 (creatures in the burst); +5 vs. Reflex | |
| Hit: 2d6 + 3 radiant damage. | |
| Special: Once the glyph is triggered, it disappears and cannot be triggered again. | |
| COUNTERMEASURES | |
| ♦ Disable: Thievery DC 15 (standard action). Requirement: The character must be adjacent to the glyph. Success: The character disables the glyph. Failure (14 or less): The character triggers the trap. | |

of the plush chair. Toth makes the magens look like staff-wielding human brothers sporting jet black hair and purple robes, while he assumes the form of a beautiful moon elf maiden possessing long blue hair, striking violet eyes, silvery robes, and a slender wand. At the start of the encounter, Toth sits in the chair. One of the magens stands next to him while the other positions itself near the illusory wall. The gnome attempts to confuse the characters and convince them to leave, but they can penetrate his disguises by making an Insight check opposed by his Bluff check.

When the characters enter, Toth stands up in his elf guise and scolds them in a melodious voice: "How dare you enter my home! Is this how the Undercellar greets its newest residents?" Toth claims to be Xandra Moonflower, a transmuter recently arrived from Evereska. The two magens are her apprentices, brothers named Deleth and Prambar. According to "Xandra," Toth rented these chambers to her and left Baldur's Gate yesterday heading for Amn ("he said he had family in the Snowflake Mountains"). Toth adopts an imperious attitude and refuses to let the characters search the chambers. If they become aggressive or refuse to leave, he threatens to turn them into toads or worse. If the characters leave, Toth

decides that he has had enough and immediately flees through the trapdoor with whatever he and his magens can carry.

If the characters don't believe Xandra's bluster or penetrate the illusions, Toth and the magens assume their natural forms (Wasp stays invisible). Toth is a balding, middle-aged gnome with an unkempt crown of fiery red hair; stress has made him haggard and he frequently grumbles about his stomach ulcers. At this point, Toth's only interest is survival. He immediately apologizes, says he regrets his actions (which is true at this point), and ultimately tries to shift the blame onto the Fetcher. He tells the characters anything they want to hear and offers to return all the stolen items if they let him go—plus, he'll allow the characters to take anything of his they want! If it looks like the characters are going to turn him over to the Fist (or even worse, the Guild), Toth decides to attack.

Tactics: Toth's only goal is to escape, and he's willing to sacrifice his minions to do so. The magens obediently position themselves between the characters and Toth to facilitate his escape, while Wasp takes flight, stays invisible, and stings or bites whoever attacks his master first, delaying if necessary. For his part, Toth blinds as many characters as possible with *see me not* before using *there, not there* to teleport behind the illusory wall. Toth and Wasp try to escape up the ladder and into the Upper City; once on the surface, the illusionist uses *veil* to assume another identity and disappear in the crowd. If Toth cannot escape or becomes bloodied, he surrenders and pleads for mercy. Wasp and the magens fight to the death unless Toth commands them otherwise.

Cabinets: The cabinets are empty, since Toth moved their contents into the crates.

Ceiling: The ceilings in the chambers are 15 feet high.

Crates: Crates provide cover. They contain a mixture of books on various arcane subjects as well as glass laboratory equipment. The crates in the room

concealed by the illusionary wall contain the items stolen by the xivorts.

Desk: The book atop the desk is Toth's personal ledger. Written in Elven, it reveals that he lost a large sum of gold to the Fetcher in a recent business deal. The desk contains quills, bottles of ink, and sheets of parchment.

Ladder: The ladder is quite rickety and requires a DC 10 Athletics check to climb. It is trapped with a *glyph of warding* that unleashes a blast of prismatic energy if anyone other than Toth or his allies touch it, destroying the ladder in the process.

Tables: Small creatures can move freely under the tables, gaining cover by doing so. A combatant can hop onto the tables with a DC 10 Athletics check, gaining total cover against enemies under the table (and vice versa). A table can be flipped as a minor action with a DC 14 Strength check, in which case any creature can stand behind it to gain cover against attacks originating from the other side.

Trapdoor: The trapdoor is arcane locked (DC 22 Strength or Thievery check to open); it has an AC of 5, Fortitude 10, and 20 hit points. Toth and his allies can freely open it.

Trunks: The trunks are unlocked and hold Toth's clothes and mundane belongings.

Treasure: Toth lost the majority of his wealth to the Fetcher, but a level 3 magic item is hidden inside the cushions of his chair and one of his trunks contains two *potions of healing* taken from Mira Tully and a single 100 gp trade bar.

Concluding the Adventure

What happens to Rothryn Toth is up to the characters. If he escapes or they let him go, he flees Baldur's Gate forever. If they turn him over to the Fist, he's given a perfunctory trial and is sentenced to the Seatower's dungeons; if they hand him over to the Fetcher or the wererats Toth is never seen again. Depending on how they parted, the illusionist might

seek the characters out in the future . . . either for help or revenge.

Margda Silveraxe and the xivorts' other victims are extremely grateful to the characters if they return the stolen property. In addition to paying what she owes them, Margda promises them future work and enthusiastically recommends them to her friends and colleagues, as do the other merchants. The Fetcher also sends his appreciation; one of his urchins delivers a bouquet of yellow roses with a handwritten card that simply states, "I hope we can help each other again in the future!" Until the characters cross the Guild, they'll have an easier time gaining access to the Undercellar—especially since they've discovered so many of its hidden entrances.

As for the fissure leading to the Underdark, the Fetcher has it collapsed, or so he claims. Perhaps he's lying to the Undercellar's other inhabitants, none of whom are eager to verify his deeds. If so, he might need adventurers to explore what lies beneath the Undercellar.

About the Author

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LYCANTHROPY

There have been many different approaches to the disease of lycanthropy. Many are too complicated to understand or are structured so poorly that the werereature dominates the game. Lycanthropy as a form of player character should be discouraged in **AD&D**. This can be done by promoting the human attributes instead of the beast's, thus making lycanthropy undesirable (as it should be).

Some players may not realize that any damage of over 50% of hit points sustained by bites in a fight with a lycanthrope may cause them to be afflicted by the disease. When this happens it may be months after the first night of the change before the character begins to suspect that lycanthropy has taken hold of his or her being. After that first night all that will be remembered is that the character was very ill and extremely tired. In the morning the townspeople will quite possibly be combing the countryside looking for a rampaging lycanthrope. The player character may join in the search for the werebeast, not realizing that he or she is the lycanthrope. After a few months of changing, the adventurer will (or should) begin to suspect that something is wrong. On the nights before the full moon the lycanthrope will become withdrawn and a bit edgy, preferring his or her own company to that of others — including family. It may be the torn and shredded clothes he or she wakes up in or the mud and scratches on the character's arms and legs that trigger the realization that he or she may be the werebeast the townspeople are searching for. If at all possible, the DM should try to moderate the campaign so that the players don't know for several months of game time that the character is now a lycanthrope.

Any human player character (humans are the only beings able to contract lycanthropy) bitten for 50% or more of his or her natural hit points has a 100% chance of becoming a lycanthrope of the same type that attacked him or her. If the player eats any belladonna within an hour after being bitten, there is a 25% chance the disease will not manifest itself, and thus the character will not be afflicted by it. If not, then a 12th or higher level patriarch must be found to administer a *cure disease* within three days after being bitten. If the adventurer is only able to find a patriarch of a high enough level after the initial three days, he or she may elect instead to have the priest attempt a *remove curse*. This spell must be performed on the player character when he or she is in wereform. The beast will need to make a monster's saving throw against magic, and while in wereform the creature will fight violently to put as much distance as it can between it and the patriarch performing the spell. If all this fails, there is still hope . . .

At this point, if the player wishes to remain a lycanthrope the two charts given later should be consulted in handling the lycanthrope as a player character. If the adventurer decides to be cured and the methods mentioned thus far have been unsuccessful, he or she may take refuge in a holy/unholy place such as a monastery or an abbey. There the clerics can administer to the afflicted one holy/unholy water laced with a goodly amount of wolfsbane and belladonna prepared by the spiritual methods of that particular religion. This potion is to be consumed by the victim at least twice a day from a silver chalice. No adventuring may be done by the character while he or she is being treated by the clerics. After a month or more (depending upon how advanced the disease is) the player character should be cured and somewhat poorer in the purse, as this procedure is very costly. The clerics will charge for the cost of the herbs and the holy/unholy water as well as for the services rendered. The DM may also wish to include the level of the priest as well as the adventurer into the cost of this treatment.

If the character has died in a fight with a lycanthrope and is resurrected, the disease will be 100% certain if the cleric raising the adventurer is unaware of the disease or fails to follow the proper procedure to eradicate it. The aforementioned cure will work on the werestricken adventurer who has been resurrected. The cleric can use a *cure disease* (if there is still time) or a *remove curse* (if there isn't) on the dead adventurer before employing the *resurrection* spell. If the cleric doesn't take the above safety measures, then it will be necessary to wait until the adventurer becomes a lycanthrope to try to *remove curse* or use the cure with the herbs and holy/unholy water.

If the character opts to remain a lycanthrope, many things will need to be taken into consideration, such as the mental anguish caused by the act of changing. Other things, like conflicting alignments between the character and his or her lycanthrope nature, and what his or her family and friends will do once they discover that their friend and loved one is the werebeast that might have been terrorizing the countryside on the nights of the full moon, will have to be

determined. The more extreme the difference in the alignments of the adventurer and the beast, the more mental anguish the character will be prone to suffer. For example, a lawful good paladin is bitten by a werewolf, which is a chaotic evil creature. He doesn't discover that he has the disease until it is too late. His mental torment is great, especially when the moon is waxing full, up to the time it is full and then for several days afterwards. (The DM may wish to select a mental disorder from the section on **INSANITY** for the character to suffer from to reflect the effects of the anguish caused by the disease). The paladin, even after being cured, is no longer a paladin because he is no longer pure enough for that honored state. The DM can elect to have the gods send the paladin on a quest in order to restore him to his paladinhood, but it is *not* recommended.

No experience points may be gained by a player character while in lycanthrope form. If the character is a fighter/lycanthrope, the fighter will be able to gain levels only as a fighter, never as a lycanthrope. This applies to all classes. The only way a lycanthrope will ever be able to control the change from man to beast is with time measured by full moons. There will be no control of the change into a werebeast for two years of game time and it will be another year before any control will be gained for the change back into a human. On the nights of a full moon all lycanthropes with less than three years experience as a werebeast will change into their wereform and remain that way from the rise of the moon till dawn.

There are other factors besides the full moon that can cause the release of the werereature in a person afflicted with lycanthropy. One common cause is stress during a melee. If the character has lost more than one-third of his or her natural hit points during the fight, there is a 50% chance that the werenature will emerge, causing the player character to be disoriented for 1 to 2 rounds (characters with more than two years of experience as a lycanthrope will not suffer this disorientation). During this time, the lycanthrope will be unable to engage in combat. He or she will also sustain damage from the change as shown on the appropriate table given below. Spells used in the vicinity of a lycanthrope such as *monster summoning III-VII*, *conjure animals*, and *animal summoning III* might cause the werenature to be released. It will be up to the DM to decide what spells or magic items could trigger the beast inside the afflicted adventurer. Arguments with other player characters as well as fear could cause the change from man to beast.

All lycanthropes will fight and do damage as described in the **MONSTER MANUAL** regardless of how long the character has been a lycanthrope. The diseased adventurer will eventually acquire the alignment of the lycanthrope form (if it isn't the same already) within 2 to 12 months.

While in wereform the character will not be interested in any of his or her belongings and will leave them where the change took place. This includes armor and weapons (except for wererats, who will carry swords).

Werbears are the most powerful form of lycanthrope. As with most lycanthropes, they will eventually flee to the woods. Once a werewolf engages in combat with a creature of an evil alignment it will fight until it or its opponent is dead. Seventy-five percent of the time, if a monster with an evil alignment is encountered, the werewolf will attack immediately.

Wereboars are the most foul-tempered of the lycanthropes. Their temperament is such that they will not join a party unless they can be the leader. If they do join one and are not its leader, they will argue bitterly with anyone who disagrees with them. This action may cause them to change into their wereform from the stress involved in the argument.

Wererats will want to live in the city near humans (humans being one of their favorite foods). If a human is captured and not eaten immediately, it will probably be held for ransom. A wererat will do all it can to keep the party it is with from discovering that it is a lycanthrope. Wererats are the only lycanthropes that will carry a sword or use any kind of a weapon while in animal form. When the marching order of a party is being decided, a wererat will almost always volunteer to be in the rear.

Weretigers are usually interested only in what benefits them. They will tolerate other cats to a certain extent and perhaps even have one for a companion. In human form weretigers can be mistaken for magic-users if they have a domestic cat for an apparent familiar. For this reason many in **AD&D** will disguise themselves as a magic-user, possibly taking up the trade just enough to give the facade an appearance of realism. Weretigers might have no qualms about turning on their party if the party begins to behave in a manner that the weretiger finds incompatible with its desires.

Werewolves are chaotic evil and therefore very unpredictable, especially in a melee. Werewolves tend to run in packs or family units. Seldom will they join a normal party of adventurers, and if they do, once discovered as a lycanthrope they will turn and attack the party, usually choosing to do so when the adventurers are in combat with another monster.

Change Table For Lycanthropes:

This table will aid the DM in determining the percentage chances of a player character lycanthrope changing into and out of wereform. After six years of experience, lycanthropes will be able to control their change at will.

| WANING MOON | 1-2 years | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|-------------|-----------|-------|-----|-----|
| Full | 100%* | 75%** | 50% | 25% |
| Half | 75%** | 25% | 15% | 5% |
| Quarter | 50% | 5% | — | — |
| New Moon | 25%** | — | — | — |
| WAXING MOON | | | | |
| Quarter | 50% | — | — | — |
| Half | 75%** | 30% | 20% | 10% |
| Full | 100%* | 80% | 55% | 30% |

* There is no chance for voluntarily changing out of wereform.

** There is only a 25% chance for voluntarily changing out of wereform.

Damage Table:

This table shows how much damage a character takes from armor constriction (before the straps burst and it falls off) during sudden change to lycanthrope form.

| Armor Type | Were-bear | Were-boar | Were-rat | Were-tiger | Were-wolf |
|-------------------------------|-----------|-----------|----------|------------|-----------|
| No Armor | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Leather/Padded | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1-2 | 1 |
| Studded Leather/ Ring Mail | 1-2 | 1-2 | 1 | 1-3 | 1-2 |
| Scale Mail | 1-3 | 1-3 | 1-2 | 1-4 | 1-3 |
| Chain Mail | 1-4 | 1-4 | 1-2 | 2-4 | 1-4 |
| Splint Mail/ Banded Mail | 2-4 | 2-4 | 1-2 | 2-5 | 2-4 |
| Plate Mail | 2-5 | 2-5 | 1-3 | 2-5 | 2-5 |

ALIGNMENT

Alignment describes the broad ethos of thinking, reasoning creatures — those unintelligent sorts being placed within the *neutral* area because they are totally uncaring. Note that alignment does not necessarily dictate religious persuasion, although many religious beliefs will dictate alignment. As explained under **ALIGNMENT LANGUAGES** (q.v.) this aspect of alignment is not the major consideration. The overall behavior of the character (or creature) is delineated by alignment, or, in the case of player characters, behavior determines actual alignment. Therefore, besides defining the general tendencies of creatures, it also groups creatures into mutually acceptable or at least non-hostile divisions. This is not to say that groups of similarly aligned creatures cannot be opposed or even mortal enemies. Two nations, for example, with rulers of lawful good alignment can be at war. Bands of orcs can hate each other. But the former would possibly cease their war to oppose a massive invasion of orcs, just as the latter would make common cause against the lawful good men. Thus, alignment describes the world view of creatures and helps to define what their actions, reactions, and purposes will be. It likewise causes a player character to choose an ethos which is appropriate to his or her profession, and alignment also aids players in the definition and role approach of their respective game personae. With the usefulness of alignment determined, definition of the divisions is necessary.

Major Divisions:

There are two major divisions of four opposite points of view. All four are not mutually exclusive, although each pair is mutually opposed.

Law And Chaos: The opposition here is between organized groups and individuals. That is, law dictates that order and organization is necessary and

desirable, while chaos holds to the opposite view. Law generally supports the group as more important than the individual, while chaos promotes the individual over the group.

Good And Evil: Basically stated, the tenets of good are human rights, or in the case of **AD&D**, creature rights. Each creature is entitled to life, relative freedom, and the prospect of happiness. Cruelty and suffering are undesirable. Evil, on the other hand, does not concern itself with rights or happiness; purpose is the determinant.

There can never exist a lawful chaos or an evil good. These, and their reverses, are dichotomous. This is not to say that they cannot exist in the same character or creature if it is insane or controlled by another entity, but as general divisions they are mutually exclusive pairs. Consider also the alignment graph. If law is opposed to chaos, and good to evil, then the radically opposed alignments are lawful neutral — chaotic neutral, neutral good — neutral evil, lawful good — chaotic evil, and lawful evil — chaotic good. Lawful groups might, for example, combine to put down some chaotic threat, for example, just as readily as good groups would combine to suppress some powerful evil. Basic understanding and agreement, however, is within the general specific alignment, i.e. one of the nine categories. These are defined as follows:

NEUTRALITY: Absolute, or true, neutral creatures view everything which exists as an integral, necessary part or function of the entire cosmos. Each thing exists as a part of the whole, one as a check or balance to the other, with life necessary for death, happiness for suffering, good for evil, order for chaos, and vice versa. Nothing must ever become predominant or out of balance. Within this naturalistic ethos, humankind serves a role also, just as all other creatures do. They may be more or less important, but the neutral does not concern himself or herself with these considerations except where it is positively determined that the balance is threatened. Absolute neutrality is in the central or fulcrum position quite logically, as the neutral sees all other alignments as parts of a necessary whole. This alignment is the narrowest in scope.

NEUTRAL GOOD: Creatures of this alignment see the cosmos as a place where law and chaos are merely tools to use in bringing life, happiness, and prosperity to all deserving creatures. Order is not good unless it brings this to all; neither is randomness and total freedom desirable if it does not bring such good.

NEUTRAL EVIL: Similar to the neutral good alignment, that of neutral evil holds that neither groups nor individuals have great meaning. This ethos holds that seeking to promote weal for all actually brings woe to the truly deserving. Natural forces which are meant to cull out the weak and stupid are artificially suppressed by so-called good, and the fittest are wrongfully held back, so whatever means are expedient can be used by the powerful to gain and maintain their dominance, without concern for anything.

LAWFUL GOOD: Creatures of lawful good alignment view the cosmos with varying degrees of lawfulness or desire for good. They are convinced that order and law are absolutely necessary to assure good, and that good is best defined as whatever brings the most benefit to the greater number of decent, thinking creatures and the least woe to the rest.

LAWFUL NEUTRAL: It is the view of this alignment that law and order give purpose and meaning to everything. Without regimentation and strict definition, there would be no purpose in the cosmos. Therefore, whether a law is good or evil is of no import as long as it brings order and meaning.

LAWFUL EVIL: Obviously, all order is not good, nor are all laws beneficial. Lawful evil creatures consider order as the means by which each group is properly placed in the cosmos, from lowest to highest, strongest first, weakest last. Good is seen as an excuse to promote the mediocrity of the whole and suppress the better and more capable, while lawful evilness allows each group to structure itself and fix its place as compared to others, serving the stronger but being served by the weaker.

CHAOTIC GOOD: To the chaotic good individual, freedom and independence are as important to life and happiness. The ethos views this freedom as the only means by which each creature can achieve true satisfaction and happiness. Law, order, social forms, and anything else which tends to restrict or abridge individual freedom is wrong, and each individual is capable of achieving self-realization and prosperity through himself, herself, or itself.

Illus. by J. Chan

Listen . . .
 “Yes, my love?”
 “Do you hear them?”
 “Yes. They crawl and writhe, endlessly muttering.”
 “If you listen, they will drive you mad.”
 “Ah, but if you serve them . . .”

—Edgar and Katarin Tolstoff

Transformed by the foul whispers heard through the door of a sealed vault, Edgar and Katarin Tolstoff work to liberate an ancient archmage—and to reinvigorate the world-shattering Worm that Walks.

BACKGROUND

It was destiny. They had known since they were children that they would be together forever. They shared an uncommon connection: completing each other's sentences, experiencing the same dreams, and wailing when the other was hurt. Their inexhaustible curiosity kept them together—and their home and the surrounding village gave them plenty of places to explore. They would slip out of the keep and watch the peasants, but sharp whispers and cold stares made them feel uncomfortable, and they ventured forth less and less, turning their attentions to their own crumbling demesne.

They prowled the cavernous corridors below the keep, discovering hidden rooms, secret passages, and

many other oddities—but their strangest finding of all lay in the catacombs, a place their mother had strictly forbidden them from entering. Edgar and Katarin knew that the Tolstoff clan had its secrets; knew that not all of their ancestors were kindly or good, despite the self-conscious placidity of their official family history. The catacombs held the evidence of the Tolstoffs' corrupt past, and so had remained untouched for years. The vaults within bore strange glyphs and dire warnings to leave the dead alone. Aside from the occasional creak or susurrus of webs, it was quiet. But one vault was not so silent.

The children heard a guttural whisper coming from within, a demand for them to wait. Intrigued, Edgar and Katarin stopped and listened. The male voice asked for their company—just a small amount of their time—and offered to teach them magic in exchange.

Katarin was thrilled; stories of sorcerers and wizard duels had always captivated the girl. Edgar, on the other hand, was fond of nature, hunting, and exploration, and he had little use for intellectual pursuits—the voice made him frightened and suspicious. He wanted to flee and never return, but he loved his sister and indulged her every whim. With some hesitation, he agreed to stay, and the pair took their first steps on the path to damnation.

Over the next decade, the children descended into the catacombs several times each week. They would relate their experiences to the voice within, and little by little, they learned magic. The master, as they called the voice, seemed pleased and eager to teach them. Edgar never made a great

effort to embrace this power, but his sister surprised him with her skill and subtlety.

The baroness, their mother, had hoped to wed Katarin to an important lord, in order to lift the family out of its slow slide into poverty. However, each time she brought a suitor to the keep, Katarin rejected him. Frustrated, her mother tried to force the issue, but any time she set a date for marriage, the young man would go missing, die in a hunting accident, or flee from the hold in fear.

The baroness came to believe that her son, who was equally uninterested in marriage, had something to do with this string of failures. She began to investigate her children, instructing her servants to spy on them and issue regular reports. Yet she learned nothing—all her suspicions seemed groundless. Then, one night, she resolved to follow Edgar and Katarin herself, hoping to confront them directly and expose their wickedness. By doing so, she believed that she would put their unnatural closeness to rest.

In the dead of night, the baroness followed them through a secret door in the feast hall, down the old stairs, and into the dusty tunnels. With each step, her apprehension grew. She dreaded their destination, for she knew what evil lurked below.

Her fears were confirmed. Edgar and Katarin stood before the vault of their grandfather, their very souls at the precipice of annihilation. Terrified, she ran out from her hiding place and pulled at them, screaming, urging them to flee the dreadful thing.

The master spoke, his sadness clear with each word. He told his pupils that their mother would never let them be together, that she would force them to wed others and break up their happy family. His speech had the desired effect. Katarin turned, stared at her mother with hate-filled eyes, and spewed a stream of profanity that shocked the baroness to the core. The woman was filled with revulsion at what her children had become, and she tried to flee to warn others. But Edgar, knowing that she would bring trouble to him and his sister if she escaped, cut his mother down where she stood, spilling her blood onto the dusty tiles of the family tomb.

Since that tragic night, Edgar and Katarin have never been the same. The stain on their souls is too dark, too pronounced for them to resume a normal life. Instead, they live in service to their grandfather, allowing him to extend his influence beyond his prison and corrupt those in and around the keep. He demands that they find a way to loosen the bonds of his vault—promising that, once he is freed, he will usher them into the power of the Worm that Walks.

THE WORM THAT WALKS

The baroness was well aware of the evil that festered beneath her house. Years ago, her father—then still human—dabbled in forbidden lore, scouring occult texts in search of clues about a deceased god known as the Worm that Walks. He mastered wicked spells, acquired foul magic items, and made pacts with terrifying entities, all in pursuit of the elusive truth about this lost deity. As a reward for his single-minded devotion, the Worm that Walks bestowed its filthy blessing, showering the mortal in a torrent of ravenous worms and maggots. The vermin devoured his physical form, but before he died, his soul transferred to

GOALS

More than anything, Edgar and Katarin want to be left alone, but they are also pragmatic, understanding that their unnatural affection makes them a target for the forces of good. Their grandfather whispers and mutters through the door of his vault, warning the pair that people will come for them, that word will spread of their mother's murder, and that Edgar will be hanged for the crime, forever sundering their love. If only the archmage could be freed from his prison, he would shelter them with his powerful sorcery, destroying anyone who tried to harm them.

Since the murder, Edgar has changed. He rarely leaves the keep by day, and when he does venture out, it is under the cover of a heavy cloak. He refuses to touch Katarin and hesitates even to speak to her, out of fear that he might pass on the disgusting cancer that is eating him alive. Instead, Edgar relies on his remaining guards, who have become physically corrupted (*Book of Vile Darkness* page 186) due to the malevolence in Tolstoff Keep.

Katarin's efforts to open the vault have failed. She drained the meager remains of her family's coffers to acquire the services of potent wizards, conjure up demons, and employ a myriad of magical techniques to breach the wards. Nothing has worked—and her attempts to find a cure for her disease-wracked brother have been equally unsuccessful. Now penniless, she is desperate for coin.

To this end, Katarin left the old keep to install herself in the court of a nearby king. With the help of Draen Raelgal, a gnome wererat who acts as a servant for her and her brother, she looks for unsuspecting nobles to blackmail. She lures them into trysts, gains their confidence, and then threatens to expose their darkest secrets unless they pay her off. Invariably, they give her coins and jewels, which she sends back to her brother, expecting that Edgar will use them to fund their master's liberation.

In the meantime, Edgar has slipped deeper and deeper into madness. The entity that is awakening within him fills his mind with obscene images and dark revelations that drive him into depravity. He orders his corrupted soldiers to round up peasants and bring them to the keep to feed his disturbing lusts. The remains of his victims are thrown to his pets—a psurlon and a gibbering moulder that he keeps hidden in the chapel.

Katarin fears that Edgar's predations will provoke the villagers into rising up against the mad baron. Thus, she returns to the keep frequently to spend time with her brother, hoping to calm and control him, before all their plans fall apart.

the wriggling host, leaving him immensely powerful but ap-
pallingly transformed.

Frightened by his new form, his daughter hired a band of adventurers to destroy him. Over the years, she had spied on her father's terrible doings, and she had overheard enough of his mutterings to know that if he were unchecked, he would unleash great evil on the world. However, even the powerful adventurers could not kill the thing that her father had become. In the end, they settled for sealing him in a vault below the keep. The baroness used her vast wealth to pay for spells strong enough to hold him there, encasing him for eternity (or so she thought) in eldritch bonds.

USING THESE VILLAINS

Edgar and Katarin work best when used together. Although their scheme keeps them in different locations much of the time, they are careful to avoid excessive risks. Katarin is a subtle manipulator, using others to fight her battles for her. Edgar is a paranoid psychopath who hides in the ruins of his family estate, tormented by the voice of his grandfather and the tumor that grows in his gut. He protects himself with corrupted soldiers who share his appalling tastes.

The siblings are not as close as they once were. Katarin believes that Edgar puts the money she sends toward the release of their grandfather, but that is not the case. Meanwhile, Edgar resents the dalliances and trysts that his sister uses to coerce her marks. Thus, tension grows between them; if properly exploited, it could be used to drive a wedge between the two siblings.

Introducing these villains separately is easy, because they move in different circles. The PCs might come across Katarin while spending time in a city and be drawn into her scheme when she tries to ensnare an NPC ally—or perhaps a player character. If the characters try to meddle, she might send Draen and his dire rats after them, while she returns to her family's keep to lie low for a while.

Alternatively, the PCs might face Edgar first. Since the mad baron preys on his subjects, the party could stumble onto a village in mourning or meet refugees fleeing the realm. The

tales of woe could lead the PCs back to the keep, where they can confront the siblings in the heart of their lair.

Of course, the pair's superficial schemes mask their true objective, which endangers the entire world. Their entombed grandfather serves the Worm that Walks, a dead god of incalculable power. This terrifying entity means to seize the world for its own despicable purpose and devour everything in it. The nobles' ancestor is a linchpin in the deity's plan: Through him, it can be released from its own sepulcher.

If the PCs manage to thwart or drive off the siblings, Edgar and Katarin return to the keep as soon as possible, more committed than ever before to releasing their grandfather in revenge. They do not realize that the archmage would have no further use for them once freed. Indeed, they will likely be the first victims of the Worm that Walks, as it returns to the world to usher in a new age of despair.

THE TOLSTOFFS IN EBERRON

Katarin operates in Korth, the capital of Karrnath; she lives in a small house near Crownhome. She has set her sights on General Thauram (*Five Nations* page 113), a decorated officer who oversees the city's defenses and commands the White Lions brigade—the principal defenders of Korth. Thauram personally interrogates important prisoners, and Katarin believes that by befriending him, she can learn more about wealthy individuals who would be easy to exploit.

THE TOLSTOFFS IN FAERÛN

Situated where the Laughingflow drains into the Evermoors, Tolstoff Keep and the surrounding hamlet have suffered incredibly. Between the trolls, the giants, and the rampaging barbarians, the family has faced extinction on more occasions than anyone can remember. While his sister is away in Silverymoon, Edgar sends his mercenaries to raid the Evermoor Way for supplies. In his growing madness, he has begun to consider raising an army of mercenaries to lay siege to Nesmé, the only town of appreciable size on the Evermoors. Edgar keeps this plot to himself because he knows that Katarin would think it reckless and foolhardy.

APPEARANCE AND BEHAVIOR

Although only in his mid-twenties, Edgar Tolstoff retains neither youth nor vigor. Disease ravages his corpulent body. Festering wounds leak watery pus, while swollen growths burst on his arms and legs. His face, neck, and torso are a forest of fleshy tumors. The most disturbing feature of all is a large distended area that grows in his middle: A thick knot filled with fluid. If anyone could bear to press an ear against it, he would hear horrific utterances emanating from the tumor. Edgar hides his ghastly appearance as well as he can, but the leakage from his various sores and eruptions ruins any clothing he wears.

His sister Katarin is his exact opposite. She shares his sandy hair and startling blue eyes, but her flesh is clean, untouched by corruption. Most of the time, she lets her luxurious locks hang free, but when trying to impress a victim, she takes the time to pile her hair on top of her head, accenting the look with a beautiful dress and some pieces of jewelry that have been stolen by her minion Draen.

Although the siblings differ physically, they are similar in personality. Both are inquisitive, eager to learn and experience new things. They are not unsettled or frightened easily. In fact, Edgar is fond of insects and worms, displaying them in



Edgar Tolstoff

small jars throughout his personal chambers on the second floor of the keep.

Both Tolstoff nobles are extraordinarily loyal. Once they declare their friendship to someone, they are loath to jeopardize it. However, they interpret friendship in unusual ways. They try to anticipate a person's needs and desires, often committing terrible acts because they think the outcome will please their erstwhile ally.

EDGAR TOLSTOFF

CR 7

hp 57 (7 HD)

Male human ranger 3/duskblade^{PH2} 2/cancer mage^{BoVD} 2
NE Medium humanoid

Init +1; **Senses** blindsight 30 ft.; Listen +7, Spot +6

Languages Abyssal, Common; telepathy with cancerous companion

AC 15, touch 11, flat-footed 14
(+1 Dex, +4 armor)

Immune drow poison

Fort +14 (+17 against poison), **Ref** +7, **Will** +3

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee +1 *longsword* +10 (1d8+4/19–20) or

Melee +1 *longsword* +8 (1d8+4/19–20) and
+1 *short sword* +8 (1d6+2/19–20) or

Melee unarmed strike +9 (1d3+3 nonlethal plus disease) or

Melee touch +9 (disease)

Ranged mwk composite longbow +8 (1d8+3/x3 plus poison)

Base Atk +6; **Grp** +9

Atk Options disease, favored enemy humans +2, poison
(drow poison, Fort DC 13, unconscious 1 minute/unconscious 2d4 hours), sneak attack +1d6

Special Actions *arcane attunement* 4/day

Combat Gear 3 doses drow poison, *potion of cure moderate wounds*, scroll of *bull's strength*, scroll of *obscuring mist*

Duskblade Spells Known (CL 2nd):

1st (4/day)—*burning hands* (DC 12), *swift expeditious retreat*, *true strike*

0 (4/day)—*acid splash* (+7 ranged touch), *touch of fatigue* (+9 melee touch, DC 11)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 7th):

2/day—*contagion* (+9 melee touch, DC 12)

Abilities Str 16, Dex 12, Con 16, Int 13, Wis 8, Cha 15

SQ armored mage, cancerous companion, disease host, wild empathy +5 (+1 magical beasts)

Feats Endurance^B, Combat Casting^B, Deformity (obese)^{BoVD}, Great Fortitude^B, Poison Immunity^{BoVD}, Toughness, Track^B, Two-Weapon Fighting^B, Verminfriend^{B BoVD} (see page 25), Willing Deformity^{B BoVD}

Skills Concentration +9, Gather Information +7, Heal +3, Hide +6, Intimidate +7, Jump +9, Knowledge (nature) +8, Listen +7, Move Silently +7, Search +3, Sense Motive +1, Sleight of Hand +5, Spellcraft +5, Spot +6, Survival +5 (+7 aboveground natural environments), Tumble +5

Possessions combat gear plus +1 *studded leather*, +1 *longsword*, +1 *short sword*, masterwork composite longbow (+3 Str bonus) with 20 arrows

Disease (Ex) Shakes—unarmed strike or touch, Fortitude DC 16, incubation period 1 day, damage 1d8 Dex.

Disease (Ex) Slimy doom—unarmed strike or touch, Fortitude DC 16, incubation period 1 day, damage 1d4 Con. When damaged, victim must succeed on a second saving throw or 1 point of damage is drain instead.

Arcane Attunement (Sp) For a combined total of four times per day, Edgar can use *dancing lights*, *detect magic*, *flare* (DC 11), *ghost sound*, and *read magic*. Caster level 2nd.

Armored Mage (Ex) Edgar ignores the chance for arcane spell failure imposed by light armor and light shields.

Cancerous Companion (Ex) An intelligent (Int 6) tumor grows inside Edgar. The tumor and Edgar can communicate telepathically. The cancerous companion uses all of Edgar's statistics except Intelligence. The cancerous companion cannot take actions. It bestows Edgar with blindsight out to 30 feet.

Disease Host (Ex) Edgar never takes damage from disease, though he might manifest cosmetic effects. Whenever he encounters a disease, he becomes a carrier and can transmit the disease to others. If Edgar is the target of a *remove disease* spell, he takes 1d6 points of damage per caster level and loses his blindsight for 1d10 days.

KATARIN TOLSTOFF

CR 7

hp 30 (8 HD)

Female human aristocrat 1/enchanter 5/mindbender^{CAr} 2
NE Medium humanoid

Init +7; **Senses** Listen +5, Spot +5

Languages Abyssal, Common, Draconic, Infernal; telepathy 100 ft.

AC 19, touch 14, flat-footed 16

(+3 Dex, +4 armor, +1 deflection, +1 natural)

Fort +6, **Ref** +5, **Will** +11

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee mwk rapier +7 (1d6/18–20)

Ranged light crossbow +6 (1d8/19–20)

Base Atk +3; **Grp** +3

Special Actions *instant daze* 4/day, *push the weak mind* 1/day

Combat Gear *oil of magic weapon*, 2 *potions of cure light wounds*, *potion of protection from arrows* 10/magic, *potion of sanctuary*, scroll of *blink*, scroll of *blur*, scroll of *charm person* (CL 6th), 2 scrolls of *Melf's acid arrow* (CL 6th), scroll of *misdirection*, scroll of *suggestion*, scroll of *summon monster III*, *wand of invisibility* (25 charges)

Wizard Spells Prepared (CL 6th; prohibited schools evocation and necromancy):

3rd—*dispel magic*, *heightened charm person* (DC 18), *slow* (DC 17), *suggestion* (DC 18)

2nd—*blur*, *cloud of bewilderment*^{SC} (DC 16), *eagle's splendor*, *touch of idiocy* (+6 melee touch), *whispering wind*

1st—*charm person* (DC 16), *color spray* (DC 15), *disguise self*, *mage armor*[†], *shock and awe*^{SC}

0—*acid splash* (+6 ranged touch), *daze* (DC 15), *detect magic*, *ghost sound* (DC 14), *read magic*

† Already cast

Abilities Str 10, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 18, Wis 12, Cha 16

SQ familiar (none at present)

Feats Eschew Materials, Evil Brand^B (see page 24), Heighten Spell^B, Improved Initiative, Persuasive, Scribe Scroll^B, Spell Focus (enchantment)^B, Verminfriend^{B BoVD} (see page 25)

Skills Bluff +12, Concentration +6, Decipher Script +9, Diplomacy +16*, Disguise +7 (+9 acting), Gather Information +8, Intimidate +14*, Knowledge (arcana) +11, Knowledge (nobility) +9, Knowledge (the planes) +6, Listen +5, Sense Motive +8, Spellcraft +14, Spot +5

* When interacting with evil creatures, Katarin gains a +2 circumstance bonus on Diplomacy and Intimidate checks.

Possessions combat gear plus masterwork rapier, light crossbow with 10 bolts, *ring of protection* +1, *amulet of natural armor* +1, *cloak of resistance* +1

Spellbook spells prepared plus all cantrips except evocation and necromancy; 1st—*disguise self*, *shield*; 2nd—*alter self*; 3rd—*blink*



Katarin Tolstoff

Instant Daze (Sp) Four times per day, when an enemy that has 8 or fewer Hit Dice makes a melee attack against Katarin, she can as an immediate action daze the opponent for 1 round unless it succeeds on a DC 16 Will save.

Push the Weak Mind (Sp) Once per day, Katarin can influence a creature through speech or telepathy as the *suggestion* spell, but with a range of 100 feet and a duration of 7 hours (or until completed); Will DC 17 negates; CL 7th.

DRAEN RALGAEL

"Kill them all. Stab out their eyes. Tear out their tongues! Eat, eat, eat!"

—Draen Ralgael

Edgar and Katarin's most useful and powerful servant is Draen Ralgael, a whisper gnome cursed with lycanthropy. Although he is raving mad, utterly obsessed with eating living flesh, he remains a reliable agent, adept at moving unseen and learning the secrets of their enemies.

Draen was not always evil. He was once a champion of his people—a fearless guardian who helped to patrol the borders of his community, safeguarding it from kobold and goblinoid attacks. The coming of the dark host, a vast army in service to the evil god Nerull, shattered his world, and Draen was one of many who fell to the enemy. Unlike his kin, however, he survived, invigorated by the curse of lycanthropy that he acquired when he was bitten by a wererat during the attack.

GOALS

Draen is filled with self-loathing, haunted by the memories of his old life. He pines for the past, yearning to go home to his people, even though he knows that any survivors are scattered to the winds. Regardless, his curse—and his acquiescence to the dark impulses that accompany it—forever bars him from rejoining his kind. However, he still clings to the hope that if he could somehow escape the beast within, he could resume the life that was stolen from him.

Draen believes that his salvation lies with Edgar. The corrupted Baron has promised to find some way to alleviate the gnome's suffering in exchange for service. Edgar has dangled countless possible cures in front of the gnome, but each one has failed, driving Draen deeper into madness. Despite these disappointments, Draen remains loyal, believing that Edgar's efforts will one day pay off.

USING DRAEN

Draen is the Tolstoffs' problem-solver: their spy, bodyguard, and personal assassin. Currently he is charged with protecting and assisting Katarin as she works to funnel gold back to the estate. Thus, whenever Katarin finds herself in over her head, Draen is always nearby, ready to lift her out of trouble by butchering those around her.

A capable opponent in his own right, Draen sometimes undertakes missions for Katarin. Generally, these jobs entail murder and espionage, but in between such tasks, he is notorious for snatching innocents off the streets and dragging them into the sewers, where he and his dire rat friends eat them alive.

Appearance and Behavior

When in humanoid form, Draen looks like a tall, slender gnome, about 4 feet in height and weighing 40 pounds. His skin is pale green, and he has gray eyes. He favors body art; whorls and patterns cover him from head to toe. He wears two silver rings in his left ear and an iron ring in his nose. He rarely goes without his mithral shirt and always keeps his hand crossbow ready.

When Draen changes shape, his hybrid form and his dire rat form are particularly foul. He looks like a big, bloated rat covered in bristling black fur, with a bright green tail and nose.

Draen has no knowledge of his masters' true goal or the thing that is trapped beneath their keep. In his ignorance, he happily serves. To him, the Tolstoffs are trustworthy, tolerant employers who have accepted him despite his cruel and unpredictable nature. They comfort him when they can, and though they clearly exploit his talents, Draen does not mind since it makes him feel useful.

DRAEN RALGAEL

Male whisper gnome^{RS} wererat rogue 3

CR 5

HUMANOID FORM

hp 25 (4 HD)

CE Small humanoid (gnome, shapechanger)

Init +8; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; Listen +11, Spot +11

Languages Common, Gnome; rat empathy

AC 21, touch 15, flat-footed 17; **Dodge**, +4 against giants (+1 size, +4 Dex, +4 armor, +2 natural)

Resist evasion

Fort +5, **Ref** +9, **Will** +6

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee +1 rapier +7 (1d4+2/18–20)
Ranged mwk hand crossbow +7 (1d3/19–20 plus poison)
Base Atk +2; **Grp** –1
Atk Options +1 on attack rolls against kobolds and goblinoids, poison (black adder venom, Fort DC 11, 1d6 Con/1d6 Con), sneak attack +2d6
Special Actions alternate form
Combat Gear dose of black adder venom, flask of acid, *elixir of hiding*, *potion of cure light wounds*
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 1st):
 1/day—*ghost sound* (DC 10), *mage hand*, *message*, *silence* (centered on self)

Abilities Str 12, Dex 18, Con 15, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 10
SQ trap sense +1, trapfinding
Feats Alertness, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Iron Will^B, Weapon Finesse^B
Skills Balance +12, Climb +9, Escape Artist +10, Hide +18, Jump +9, Listen +11, Move Silently +14, Spot +11, Swim +9, Tumble +12, Use Rope +4 (+6 bindings)
Possessions combat gear plus mithral shirt, +1 rapier, master-work hand crossbow with 10 bolts

Alternate Form (Su) Draen can assume a bipedal hybrid form or the form of a dire rat.

HYBRID FORM

hp 29 (4 HD); **DR** 10/silver
 CE Small humanoid (gnome, shapechanger)
Init +11; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; Listen +11, Spot +11
Languages Common, Gnome; rat empathy
AC 25, touch 18, flat-footed 18; Dodge, +4 against giants (+1 size, +7 Dex, +4 armor, +3 natural)
Resist evasion
Fort +6, **Ref** +12, **Will** +6

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)
Melee +1 rapier +10 (1d4+2/18–20) and bite +4 (1d4 plus curse of lycanthropy) or
Melee 2 claws +9 each (1d4 plus curse of lycanthropy) and bite +4 (1d4 plus curse of lycanthropy)
Ranged mwk hand crossbow +10 (1d3/19–20 plus poison)
Base Atk +2; **Grp** –1
Atk Options +1 on attack rolls against kobolds and goblinoids, poison (black adder venom, Fort DC 11, 1d6 Con/1d6 Con), sneak attack +2d6
Special Actions alternate form
Combat Gear dose of black adder venom, flask of acid, *elixir of hiding*, *potion of cure light wounds*
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 1st):
 1/day—*ghost sound* (DC 10), *mage hand*, *message*, *silence* (centered on self)

Abilities Str 12, Dex 24, Con 17, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 10
SQ trap sense +1, trapfinding
Feats Alertness, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Iron Will^B, Weapon Finesse^B
Skills Balance +15, Climb +9, Escape Artist +13, Hide +21, Jump +9, Listen +11, Move Silently +17, Spot +11, Swim +9, Tumble +15, Use Rope +7 (+9 bindings)
Possessions combat gear plus mithral shirt, +1 rapier, master-work hand crossbow with 10 bolts

Curse of Lycanthropy (Su) Target must succeed on a DC 15 Fortitude save or contract lycanthropy.
Alternate Form (Su) Draen can assume a humanoid (whisper gnome) form or the form of a dire rat.



Draen Ralgael

DIRE RAT FORM

hp 29 (4 HD); **DR** 10/silver
 CE Small humanoid (gnome, shapechanger)
Init +11; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; Listen +11, Spot +11
Languages Common, Gnome; rat empathy
AC 21, touch 18, flat-footed 13; Dodge, +4 AC against giants (+1 size, +7 Dex, +3 natural)
Resist evasion
Fort +6, **Ref** +12, **Will** +6

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares), climb 20 ft.
Melee bite +10 (1d4 plus disease and curse of lycanthropy)
Base Atk +2; **Grp** –1
Atk Options +1 on attack rolls against kobolds and goblinoids, sneak attack +2d6
Special Actions alternate form
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 1st):
 1/day—*ghost sound* (DC 10), *mage hand*, *message*, *silence* (centered on self)

Abilities Str 12, Dex 24, Con 17, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 10
SQ trap sense +1, trapfinding
Feats Alertness, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Iron Will^B, Weapon Finesse^B
Skills Balance +15, Climb +15, Escape Artist +13, Hide +21, Jump +9, Listen +11, Move Silently +17, Spot +11, Swim +15, Tumble +15, Use Rope +7 (+9 bindings)

Curse of Lycanthropy (Su) Target must succeed on a DC 15 Fortitude save or contract lycanthropy.
Disease (Ex) Filth fever—injury (bite), Fort DC 15, incubation period 1d3 days, damage 1d3 Dex and 1d3 Con.
Alternate Form (Su) Draen can assume a humanoid (whisper gnome) form or a bipedal hybrid form.

Illus. by R. Gallegos

TOLSTOFF KEEP

At the edge of a large, stinking swamp rises a low hill, on which huddles a mishmash of hovels, houses, and shops. Thrusting up from the center is Tolstoff Keep, an old castle stained dark from centuries of grime, rain, and choking vines. The air is still and silent, except for the occasional screams of swamp-dwelling terrors. A heavy mist swirls about the area, contributing to the hacking cough that afflicts the locals who call this wretched place home.

Few people live in the keep. Aside from Edgar and his sister, the only residents are a handful of guards, all of whom wear disturbing leather masks molded to look like idiotic smiling faces. Villagers whisper that the soldiers are not human—or at least not human any longer. They make no sounds and interact only with one another. No one outside the keep has seen their faces, but some claim that beneath the masks are masses of undulating flesh, not unlike tangles of worms.

KEY FEATURES

The hovels and shacks crowd right up against the castle walls, and the stench of the afflicted and the corrupt hangs like a pall over the area. The castle walls are fashioned from dark stone. Many of the stones have stains that resemble faces twisted with suffering or hands reaching out for help. Indeed, those who brush

against the walls find their cloaks snagged by stones, caught in improbable ways.

The keep—the structure within the walls—is two stories tall, though only the main floor is shown on the map. The labyrinthine upper level consists of bedrooms, meeting rooms, and privies, none of which is especially noteworthy—though there are a number of secret passages, isolated rooms, and odd architectural features. Three turrets rise another 20 feet above the second floor, overlooking the outer wall by at least 10 feet.

Structural Properties

The following general properties apply to all rooms unless otherwise noted in the area descriptions.

Outer Wall: The keep is encircled by a wall (Climb DC 20) that is 40 feet tall and that descends 10 feet below the ground to thwart sappers. Near the base, the wall is about 5 feet thick, gradually thinning to 2 feet at the top where crenellations rise to protect the archers who patrol the perimeter. At its base, the wall has a break DC of 50, hardness 8, and 900 hit points per 10-foot-square section. Toward the top, the wall has a break DC of 50, hardness 8, and 360 hit points per section. The crenellations provide cover to creatures standing behind them.

Keep Walls: The exterior walls (Climb DC 20) of the keep are made of superior masonry and are 2 feet thick, with a break DC of 35, hardness 8, and 180 hit points per 10-foot-square section. The internal walls (Climb DC 15)



Tolstoff Keep

of the structure are masonry and have a break DC of 35, hardness 8, and 90 hit points per section.

Arrow Slits: There are few windows in the keep, though there are numerous arrow slits. These openings grant archers improved cover (+8 bonus to Armor Class and +4 bonus on Reflex saves). Characters attempting to cast spells, such as *fireball*, through the arrow slits must succeed on ranged touch attacks against AC 15. A Small character can squeeze through an arrow slit by making a successful DC 15 Escape Artist check, while a Medium creature can do so by succeeding on a DC 30 Escape Artist check.

Floors: Aside from random splashes of filth and grime, the floors are level and free of debris.

Ceiling Height: The ceilings of the first level are 15 feet high. Dark, writhing shadows roil in the corners as if alive, though they are nothing more than tricks of the light.

Doors: Made from strong wood, all doors are 2 inches thick and have hardness 5 and 20 hit points. They are unlocked.

Illumination: Most rooms are dark, though sconces at 10-foot intervals hold unlit torches.

Smells: The entire place stinks of mildew and spoiled meat. The stench is foul enough to block the use of the scent ability, but it otherwise imposes no penalties.

Sounds: Whenever a character's Listen check result is 25 or higher, she hears a disturbing noise that sounds like something moist writhing around. The first time she hears it, she must succeed on a DC 15 Will save or be shaken for 1 round.

DEFENSES

Most of the keep's defenders have long since died from disease or fled in fear of Edgar's obscene transformation. The guards that remain are utterly corrupted. Ten warriors and two commanders patrol the grounds, and all of them have been physically mutated by the fetid Worm that Walks. If combat breaks out with any of the guards, 1d3 more guards show up every 3 rounds until all have been accounted for (for statistics, see tactical encounter 3–1, page 58). If neither corrupted commander is present at the start of the fight, one of them shows up 4 rounds after combat begins, and the other arrives 4 rounds after that.

Once the PCs arrive, Edgar flees to the catacombs (see tactical encounter 3–3, page 62); if his sister is present, she goes with him. Meanwhile, Draen (for statistics, see page 52) and six corrupted dire rats set out to find and devour the interlopers, attacking the PCs when they are least prepared. The few other denizens of the keep remain in their chambers, confident in their ability to deal with intruders.

CORRUPTED^{BoVD} DIRE RAT

CR 1

hp 7 (1 HD)

NE Small aberration (augmented animal)

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; Listen +3, Spot +3

AC 18, touch 13, flat-footed 16
(+1 size, +2 Dex, +5 natural)

Immune acid

Fort +5, **Ref** +4, **Will** +2

Speed 40 ft. (8 squares), climb 20 ft.

Melee bite +3 (1d6+2 plus disease)

Base Atk +0; **Grp** –2

Atk Options disease

Abilities Str 14, Dex 15, Con 16, Int 1, Wis 10, Cha 2

Feats Alertness, Weapon Finesse^B

Skills Climb +10, Hide +7, Jump +6, Listen +3, Move Silently +3, Spot +3, Swim +10

Disease (Ex) Filth fever—injury (bite), Fort DC 17, incubation period 1d3 days, damage 1d3 Dex and 1d3 Con.

AREA DESCRIPTIONS

Tolstoff Keep consists of several floors above ground and a catacomb below. Nearly all of the action, though, takes place on the main floor. If you wish to expand upon the castle and its contents, feel free to sketch out the upper level to suit your needs. For more on the catacombs, see tactical encounter 3–3 (page 62).

1. Courtyard: Between the outer wall and the keep is the courtyard, an area of churned mud and dead grass. In places, old bones break the surface. Two corrupted human warriors patrol the outer wall. When the PCs enter the courtyard, the guards should be at the extreme northern stretch of wall. Each round, they move 20 feet clockwise. For statistics, see tactical encounter 3–1 (page 58).

2. Entrance: The only entrance to Tolstoff Keep is a single wooden door on the east wall of the structure. Old and stained black from filth, it features a gargoyle's head with a ring through its ears that holds a knocker. The creature's head is real, carefully preserved with foul unguents.

Just inside the keep door, a large room shows its age and neglect. A crimson rug with unsettling patterns covers most of the floor, and two suits of full plate armor flank an archway leading to a hallway. Banners displaying the Tolstoff heraldry—a red-eyed raven on a gray field—hang from the ceiling.

3. Hall of Ancestors: This rectangular hall has two doors, both made of dark wood and bound in rusting iron. A rug runner extends the length of the hall, showing a vine pattern in its weave. Hanging on the walls are a half-dozen portraits of somber people, an equal mix of men and women. At the far end stands a small round table, on which is a skull surrounded by auburn hair. This gruesome decoration is the head of the old baroness. Katarin shattered her jaw to prevent others from contacting her spirit.

4. Feast Hall: This room is a large hall, with multicolored banners rotting on the walls and three rows of tables and benches. Platters of spoiled food, crawling with maggots, cover the tables. Inspection of the fare reveals that someone has recently picked over the old food. Characters who inspect the northwest corner and succeed on a DC 20 Search check discover a secret door. Depressing a concealed stud in the floor opens the door, revealing a narrow hall that ends at a short staircase descending to the catacombs. If the PCs go down the stairs, run tactical encounter 3–3 (see page 62).

Just inside the secret door, a key hangs from a hook. The key opens the door in the antechamber (area 15), which leads to the chapel (tactical encounter 3–2, page 60).

5. Kitchens: The kitchens are far nastier than the feast hall. Against the south wall are six cold ovens. Three tables running down the center of the room hold the rotting remains of three villagers, each bound in place with bloodstained leather straps. They have been opened in the middle and their insides have been scooped out, presumably for a meal.

Beneath one of the tables is a hideous spawn of Kyuss, a fearsome undead horror favored by the Worm that Walks. The creature looks like a thoroughly rotted zombie with green worms writhing in and out of its skull.

SPAWN OF KYUSS^{MM2}

CR 5

hp 29 (4 HD); fast healing 5

CE Medium undead

Init -1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +0, Spot +3

Aura fear (40 ft., DC 14)

AC 11, touch 9, flat-footed 11

(-1 Dex, +2 natural)

Immune undead immunities (MM 317)

Resist +2 turn resistance

Fort +1, **Ref** +0, **Will** +4

Weakness curative transformation

Speed 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee slam +6 (1d6+6 plus disease)

Base Atk +2; **Grp** +6

Atk Options create spawn

Abilities Str 18, Dex 9, Con —, Int 6, Wis 11, Cha 15

Feats Stealthy, Toughness

Skills Hide +5, Jump +7, Listen +0, Move Silently +5, Spot +3

Aura of Fear (Su) At the end of each of the spawn's turns, creatures within 40 feet of it must succeed on a DC 14 Will save or become panicked for 7 rounds. A creature that makes its save is immune to this particular spawn's aura of fear for 24 hours.

Curative Transformation (Ex) If a spawn of Kyuss is targeted by a *remove curse* or *remove disease* spell or similar magic, it is instantly transformed into a human zombie (MM 266).

Create Spawn (Su) As an immediate action, whenever a spawn of Kyuss strikes an opponent with a slam attack, a melee touch attack, or a ranged touch attack out to 10 feet, it can transfer a worm from its own body into that of its opponent.

Each worm is a Fine vermin with AC 10 and 1 hit point. It can be killed with normal damage or by the touch of silver. On the spawn's next turn, the worm burrows into the host's flesh. (Creatures that have a natural armor bonus of at least +5 are immune to this effect.) The worm makes its way toward the host's brain, dealing 1 point of damage per round for 1d4+1 rounds. At the end of that period, the worm reaches the brain and starts dealing 1d2 points of Intelligence damage per round until it is killed or it slays the host (death occurs at 0 Intelligence). A Small, Medium, or Large creature slain in this way rises as a new spawn of Kyuss in 1d6+4 rounds. Larger creatures gain the zombie template instead. Newly created spawn are not under the control of their creator.

While the worm is inside a host, crawling toward the brain, a *remove curse* or *remove disease* spell will kill it. In addition, a DC 20 Heal check will extract the worm and kill it. Finally, a *dispel evil* or *neutralize poison* spell will delay its progress toward the brain for 10d6 minutes. Once the worm has reached the brain, it can no longer be extracted or slowed. However, it can still be killed with a *remove curse* or *remove disease* spell.

Disease (Su) Kyuss's gift—slam, Fort DC 14, incubation period 1 day, damage 1d6 Con and 1d4 Wis. These effects manifest as rotting flesh and dementia. An afflicted creature derives half the normal benefits from natural and magical healing. A *cure disease* spell removes the affliction.

6. Sitting Room: This room holds an oval arrangement of couches and chairs. The upholstery is full of black mold and reeks of mildew. A rotting carpet covers the floor and squelches underfoot. One bookcase is intact against the eastern wall, but bookworms devoured its contents long ago.

7. Private Rooms: A short corridor leads to a cluster of passages and doors. Behind the doors are private rooms containing beds, dressers, small rugs, writing desks, chamber pots, and an assortment of miscellaneous items including clothing, old papers, corpses, and dead rats.

8. Guest Quarters: A narrow passage widens into a hallway here. Stuffed falcons, eagles, and ravens hang from the ceiling, arranged so that they appear to be flying. Doors on the south wall lead to a mixture of guest chambers, closets, and privies. A staircase on the west end of the hallway leads up to the second floor.

Three corrupted warriors and a corrupted commander patrol the hall. For statistics, see tactical encounter 3-1 (page 58).

9. Turrets: The keep has three turrets that rise 50 feet into the air. Arrow slits pierce the exterior walls. Within each turret, a spiral staircase ascends to a large, open room with a conical ceiling.

10. Archer Platforms: During its heyday, Tolstoff Keep employed nearly fifty guards. To protect the family, the baron installed archer platforms on the west and south walls, each about 8 feet off the ground, to allow archers a good angle for firing arrows down at attackers. The platforms are enclosed, but careful listeners can hear the scurrying of rats beneath their feet (Listen DC 10).

On the southern archer platform stands a corrupted human warrior, who will shoot at the PCs in tactical encounter 3-1 (see page 58) unless the party finds another way into the keep.

11. Barracks and Armory: This cluster of rooms once housed the keep's guards and their armory (the westernmost room in this block). The remaining guards still sleep here, as evidenced by the stink of sour milk and ammonia emanating from their befouled bedrolls. Anyone who makes a successful DC 15 Search check in a room has a 50% chance of turning up 1d12 gp.

12. Storerooms and Cistern: These two rooms contain the keep's food and water supply. The northern room holds a dozen kegs of beer and a well that drops to a cistern 30 feet down. The southern room holds sacks of grains, dried vegetables and fruit, and other dry goods.

13. Male Servants' Quarters: These rooms once housed the keep's male servants. Since they left soon after the death of Edgar and Katarin's mother, the quarters have been empty for years.

14. Female Servants' Quarters: These rooms held the female servants. Like the male servants' quarters, they are long abandoned.

15. Antechamber: Thick rugs cover the floor of this chamber. Dozens of religious icons and symbols, representing deities of every alignment, sit on shelves that protrude from the walls at different heights all around the room. Light shines from a pair of floor candelabras laden with fat black candles that are wrapped in incense-soaked oils. The locked door on the northern wall leads to the chapel. The door can be opened with a successful DC 25 Open Lock check, or with the key found behind the secret door in the feast hall (area 4).

Edgar preserves this room in the hope of absolving himself of the sin of matricide. He comes here once each day and lights fresh candles to keep the stench away from the icons.



CHAPTER 3
EDGAR & KATARIN
TOLSTOFF



ENCOUNTER P2: CHAMBER OF RATS

Encounter Level 7 (1,500 XP)

SETUP

16 charnel rats (R)
Boneslide hazard

Location 2: The Pyramid of Shadows is infested with charnel rats, vermin that serve the Charnel Lord (see Encounter P4 on page 6). These rats crawl through the walls and floors of the pyramid, feeding on the flesh of whatever dies by accident or violence, and on the necromantic energy that infuses the pyramid, particularly Locations 27–29. This chamber serves as their nest.

When the adventurers open the door, read:
Cold air brushes past as the door opens, carrying the smell of dust and freshly turned dirt. A fine white powder dusts the floor, except in the far corner, where bones form an enormous mound.

Perception Check
DC 20: Within the scattered dust you see the clear print of a small claw or a line made by a tail dragging along the floor.
DC 25: A large crack runs along the frame of the door in the north wall—large enough for a small animal to squeeze through. Similar cracks are evident in the walls in both chambers.

Sixteen charnel rats lurk in this room, staying out of sight in the bone piles until prey is in reach. They begin to spill out when the adventurers have all entered the room and moved past the doors leading to the refuse chamber.

16 Charnal Rats (R)

Small natural beast

Level 7 Minion

XP 75 each

Initiative +8

Senses Perception +4; low-light vision

Aura of Rot

aura 1; an enemy that starts its turn adjacent to a charnel rat takes 2 damage.

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.

AC 21; Fortitude 18, Reflex 21, Will 20

Speed 6, climb 3

⚔ Bite (standard; at-will) ♦ Weapon

+12 vs. AC; 5 damage.

Alignment Evil

Languages –

Skills Stealth +13

Str 15 (+5)

Dex 20 (+8)

Wis 13 (+4)

Con 15 (+5)

Int 4 (+0)

Cha 6 (+1)

TACTICS

Charnel rats attack by surrounding their foes. Their only tactic is to put as many rats adjacent to each enemy as possible. They enter combat gradually—four rats emerge in the first round, then eight more, and finally the last four in the third round. This prevents all sixteen rats from being caught in a single area effect power.

FEATURES OF THE AREA

Illumination: Dimly lit.
Bone Piles: The piles of bones in the corners of the room are difficult terrain.
Refuse Chamber: The northern chamber off the main room is full of bones and refuse. The rats crawl in and out of that room through a crack in the doorjamb or a small tunnel in the ceiling (which leads to Location 27). If the adventurers open the door, they release a boneslide hazard.

Boneslide Hazard

Level 7 Lurker

XP 300

The bulging door bursts open, unleashing a wave of bones.

Hazard:

When the door opens, bones gush forth from the chamber in a rushing wave.

Perception

♦ DC 28: The character notices that the door warps outward.

Additional Skill: Dungeoneering

A character who makes a DC 24 Dungeoneering check while examining the door notices that there's enormous pressure behind it, suggesting the nature of the hazard.

Trigger

Opening the door immediately sets off the boneslide.

Attack

Standard Action

Close blast 2

Targets: Creatures in blast

Attack: +11 vs. Reflex

Hit: 2d8+5 damage and immobilized (save ends)

Miss: Half damage

Sustain Standard: The boneslide continues for four rounds. The blast area is difficult terrain during and after the hazard.



ENCOUNTER P4: THE BEAST IN THE PIT

Encounter Level 8 (1,750 XP)

SETUP

Charnel lord (C)

6 charnel rats

Pivoting floor and wall trap (T)

Location 4: When the adventurers enter this area, it appears as a plain hallway or chamber, 20-feet wide and 20-feet tall, with a door and a statue at either end and a staircase leading from the northeast. Don't draw or place *D&D Dungeon Tiles* for the slope down to the pit until the trap is triggered.

When the adventurers enter the hallway, read:

A statue of a robed figure stares down the length of this wide hallway toward an exact duplicate on the other end.

When the adventurers trigger the trap, read:

The floor you're standing on suddenly tilts wildly as the wall to the south falls away. Both pivot in such a way as to hurl you down a chute to the south. The stench of rot and decay emerges from the chute as you go hurtling down it.

FEATURES OF THE AREA

Illumination: Dimly lit.

Steep Slope: The wall that becomes a floor is smooth and slick, and the short, steep slope leading to the pit has the same characteristics. A character can ascend the slope at half speed with a DC 23 Athletics check. A character adjacent to a wall can use the wall to help climb, gaining a +2 bonus to the check.

Pit: The pit at the bottom of the slope is 10 feet deep and full of filth, making it a perfect home for the Charnel Lord. Characters who fall into the pit take 1d10 damage. The squares at the bottom of the pit are difficult terrain. Climbing out of the pit requires a DC 28 Athletics check.

The Trap: The trap not only hurls characters into the Charnel Lord's pit, it also confines them within the sloped chute. Each time it is triggered, the floor and wall pivots, hurling adventurers into the chute and depositing charnel rats into the hallway. The trap can only be activated once per turn. So, if it is activated by a character, it can't be activated again until after the start of that character's next turn.

If any characters are standing on any of the squares in the four northernmost rows of squares in the chute area when the trap is triggered, they are dumped into the space beneath the floor when the floor pivots. This deals 1d10 points of damage to each character. In addition, for each round that a character remains in the pitch-black darkness beneath the floor, roll 1d6 at the start of a character's turn.

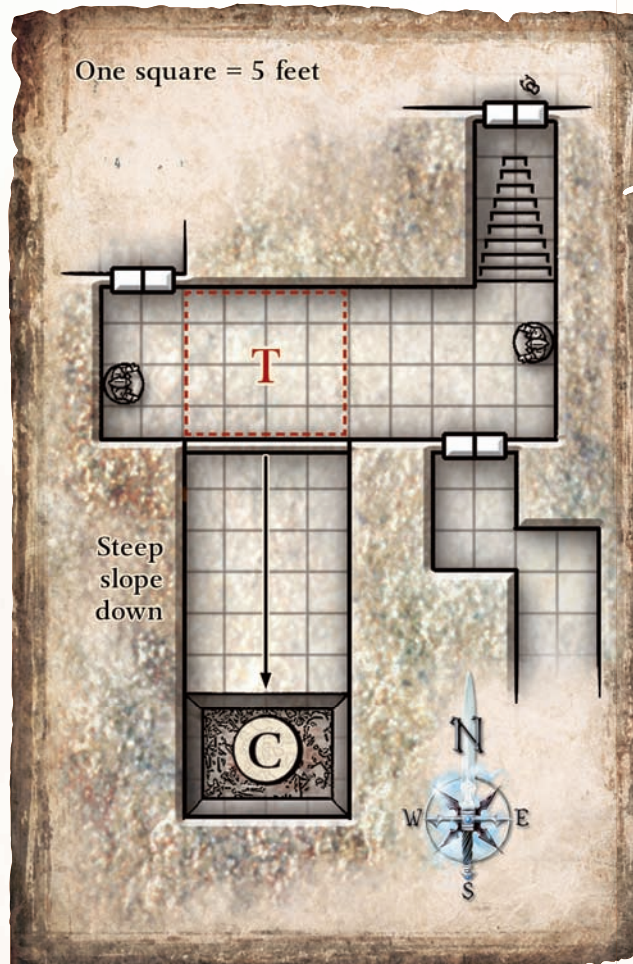
The result indicates how many charnel rats are adjacent to the character at the start of his or her turn (see "aura of rot" in the charnel rat stat block).

If the trap pivots a third time, characters in the space beneath the floor are pushed deeper into the darkness. Another pivot deposits them on the floor of the hallway. So, if the trap is activated each turn, characters must spend two turns amid the rats beneath the floor, taking damage from the aura that surrounds each rat.

TACTICS

The Charnel Lord focuses attacks on characters who are in the pit with it. If no characters land in the pit, it attacks characters within its reach, anyone within the two rows of squares closest to the pit.

The charnel rats try to crowd as many of their number as possible around the characters. The rats, startled by the trap and the sudden change in location, take their fear and anger out on the nearest adventurers. They fight to the death. (Note that charnel rats in the space beneath the floor don't attack the PCs, but the PCs still suffer from their auras of rot, as described below.)



The Best of the Dungeon Masters Guild

Things get critical this issue as we celebrate failure and success, while the rats watch from the shadows.

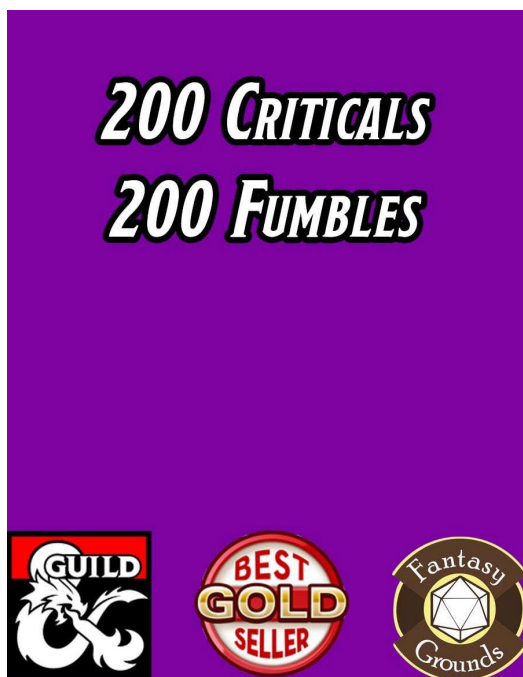


We've allowed the new century (2020) and the Lunar Calendar (the Year of the Rat) to color much of the content this issue and we couldn't help but extend those twin themes to our trawl of the DMs Guild. Read on to find out more!

CRITICAL RESULTS

What better excuse could we have for pondering critical success than it being the year 2020—the double crit of our Earthly timeline! As you'd expect from the creators of the DMs Guild, there are plenty of homebrew options for when a player or Dungeon Master scores a

critical success, as well as some pretty horrific (and sometimes funny) results for a critical fail.



200 Critical Hit & Fumble Tables, By Rob Twohy

Price: \$4.00 (PDF & Fantasy Grounds)

With a potential 200 results when a player rolls the highest number on a d20 (and the same number for when that die shows a heartbreaking one), Rob Twohy's Hit & Fumble Tables offer some diverse results. Clever DMs will weave narrative explanations for some of the more unusual results into their game, creating cinematic moments in their campaigns.

MORE INFO



Critical Failure Cards and Critical Hit Cards, by Rafael Baptistella Luiz

Price: \$4.95 each (PDF & Roll20)

Whether you're living your best combat life (Chain Damage: Critical damage, and a quarter damage to all enemy creatures adjacent to the target) or you're wishing the wizard had *prestidigitation* ("Diarrhea: You have disadvantage on Charisma checks until you take a short or long rest"), these cards by Rafael Baptistella Luiz add an extra

touch.

MORE INFO

EVEN BETTER HITS



Written by Peter Skanes

Even Better Hits: A New Way To
Critical Hit, by Peter Skanes
Price: \$0.89 (PDF)

“During play, I found myself becoming less and less excited about rolling a Critical Hit during combat. The rules as written are quick, easy to digest and internalize, and balanced, but I found myself wanting something a little more ‘crunchy’ that harkened back to some of the rules found in *Dragon* magazine,” says Peter Skanes, introducing his quick and easy rules to spice up the critical

hits in your game. “We found that the table worked best without predetermined narrative flourishes... when the players got to drive the story through interpreting their results.”

MORE INFO

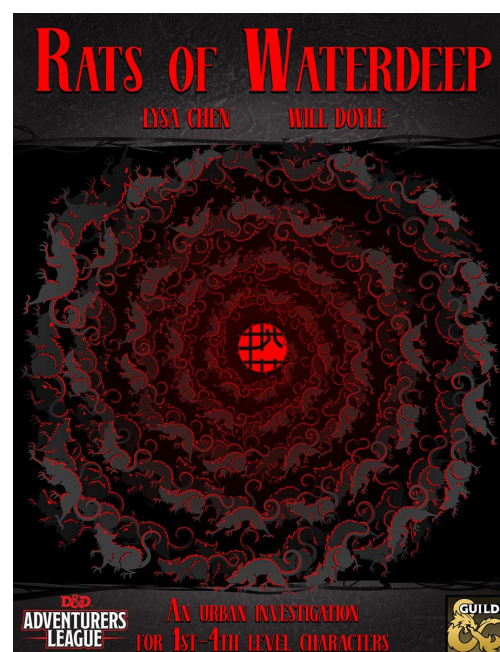
Download *200 Critical Hit & Fumble Tables* for free!

Rob Twohy’s tables provide a comprehensive list of options to help boost the critical results in your D&D game. We’re giving you the chance to download the PDF version for free for the life of this issue, making your fantastic feats or bumbling botches that little bit more epic.

DOWNLOAD THE FREE PDF

CREATOR Q&A: LYSA PENROSE, WILL DOYLE AND STACEY ALLAN

DMs Guild bestseller *Rats of Waterdeep* melds the skills of its three creators perfectly together: A classic film noir detective story (written by Lysa Penrose) that features characters using two new subclasses (created by Will Doyle), all wrapped up in gorgeous cover art (by Stacey Allan) and with plenty of amazing handouts within. The trio spoke with *Dragon+* about their collaboration.



What was the inspiration behind this D&D scenario? Was there one idea or spark that led to its creation?

Will Doyle (WD): In 2017, Lysa and I both had the honor of being made DMs Guild Adepts. I'd read Lysa's *Ruins of Hisari* and I was really impressed with her writing. She had a fresh style and her adventure was both dramatic and humorous at the same time. I'd recently designed a couple of subclasses to tie in with the release of *Xanathar's Guide to Everything*, and I wanted an adventure to bring them together. I approached Lysa with a concept and asked if she was interested in developing it. When I read her first draft, I knew straight away that she'd written a classic!

Lysa Penrose (LP): *Rats of Waterdeep* is one of my favorite things I've ever made.

Stacey Allan (SA): It's an awesome adventure.

How did the subclasses fit organically into the storyline?

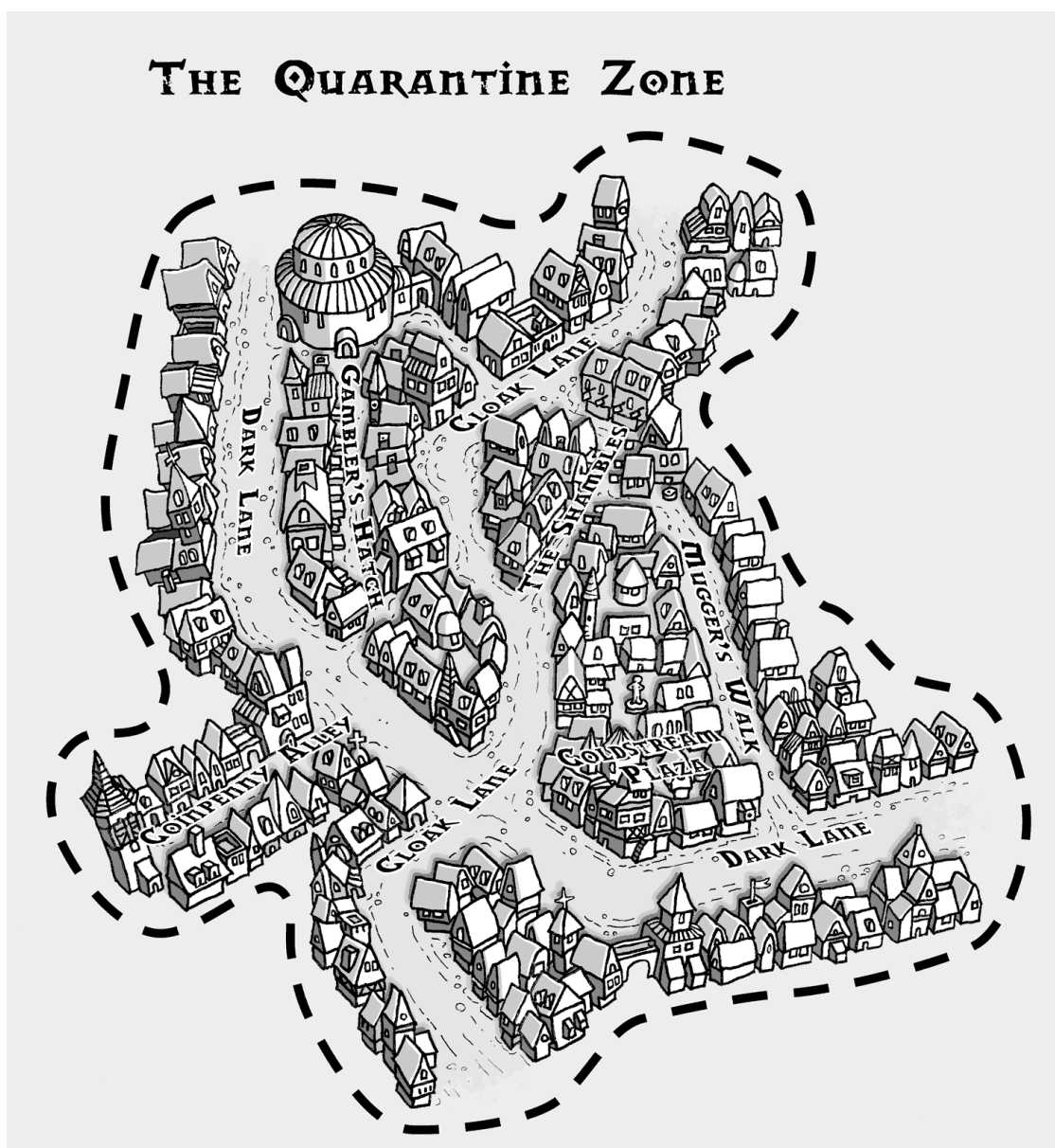
WD: The two subclasses became the main antagonists in the adventure. As it's designed primarily for 1st level characters, players with the druid or ranger class could take the new subclasses at 3rd level after seeing them in action in this adventure.



The “monster” versions of the subclasses were designed to show off some of their powers while remaining easy for DMs to run.

What are the challenges that come with setting an adventure in Waterdeep? And what are the upsides?

WD: Waterdeep is a lawful city with a strong City Watch presence, which raises some challenges. We used a quarantine to cut off a section of the Dock Ward, which gives the adventure a bit of an *Escape from New York* vibe and allows the villains to be villainous with impunity. One of the upsides of setting an adventure in Waterdeep is that it’s a huge metropolis, making it easy to include any sort of character in the story. Anything can go down here.



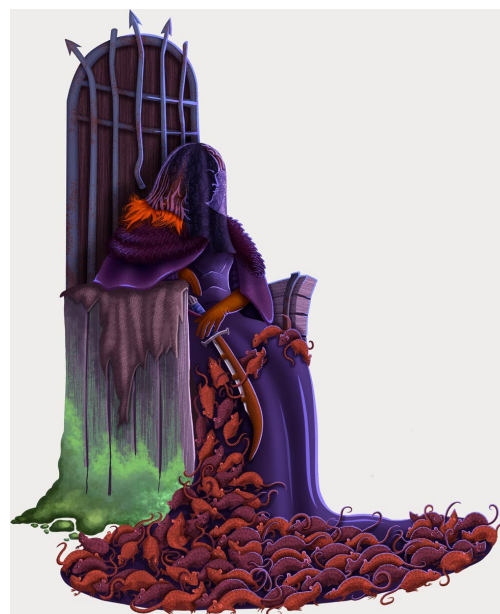
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LP: Everyone, whether they've been to a big metropolis or not, has an idea in their head of what "The City" is. Waterdeep is a great setting because it captures all of those ideas. What was more of a challenge was how we capture the "murder mystery" feel. I decided to lean into the city vibe and give the adventure a film noir feel. All of the boxed text is one of the NPCs, Bogart Locks, narrating to himself like a detective from a film noir movie. The cultural reference is (a) fun and (b) instantly sets a very clear tone for the players. Originally, that character was killed off by the Xanathar early in the adventure, but Will's editing eye nixed that to keep Bogart around and the voice of the adventure consistent. I've run *Rats of Waterdeep* a bunch of times at this point, and players always latch onto that character, some even starting to narrate their own

actions in the same way. Waterdeep was the perfect setting to do that.


What is it about rats as a creature that still gives them a slight tinge of horror?

LP: I think there is something quite frightening about swarms and too many of anything, and we do play up on that a bit. Rats also come off as unclean, dirty, and the rats in this adventure do have a grungy, dark feel to them. But almost in the same way Batman is grungy and dark, without giving too much away.




There's an interesting rivalry between the Lady of Plagues and the Rat King. Did you ever playtest who would win in a fight between them? If not, who's your money on?

WD: I never ran any head-to-head combats between them, but my money would be on the Rat King, as they can summon swarms of rats! The Lady of Plagues does have more minions available though. Hmm.



STRAIGHT TALK

FROM THE DOCKS



DEATH TOLL GROWS IN DOCK WARD

The brutal vendetta between the Rat King and the Lady of Plagues claimed more victims last night, as gangsters loyal to both bosses duelled openly in the Dock Ward streets. City Watch officials again blamed their inability to bring the fugitives to justice on the Rat Pox quarantine, which they claim has hampered their ability to attend to crimes across the Ward. In an exclusive, private interview with this publication, the Xanathar crime boss made the following statement: "The underperforming City Watch have really dropped the ball here. I know everything there is to know about crime, but even I can't see how these punks are getting away with it. DO SOMETHING CITY WATCH!"

ROT RISES AS HOPE FALLS

With swathes of the Dock Ward under quarantine and no end in sight to the Rat Pox, residents have taken matters into their own hands... or claws. Those undergoing the final stages of the Rat Pox transformation were seen on Goldstream Plaza building a statue of the so-called Lady of Plagues out of trash.

"We're calling it the Temple of Rot," squeaked one resident, who sprouted a tail during this interview. "We've given up fighting. Maybe if we worship the person who started all this, she'll take pity and lift the disease."

Pox-ridden dock denizens set up tents around the statue, chanting songs of worship and taking turns groveling at the statue's feet. However, some were skeptical this display would affect the disease.

"I think they're starting to get rat brains, too," said one mouse-eared man. "It's Rat Pox. Rat. If you ask me, the Rat King did this, and these hippies are wasting their time."

Will the Lady of Plagues be able to lift the curse? Only time will tell.

SCARLETT'S HAKE, HERRING & COD

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RAT KING, FRIEND OR FOE? See Page 4.

TOP 10 ACCESSORIES FOR YOUR GOLDFISH BOWL. Advice on Page 2.

This scenario includes some very detailed handouts. What has the feedback for those been like?

SA: The text for the handouts was down to Will and Lysa, and they were so much fun to create.

Making handouts has become one of my favorite things to do! I don't know if it's standard to include that kind of thing but I think it's definitely a bonus to have handouts which look like part of the adventure. Those 'handwritten' letters and pages from the local newspaper all help to immerse the players in the plot.

(Select to view)



Rats of Waterdeep also features an amazing cover and character art...

SA: I really enjoyed working on the art for this adventure. Lysa developed such interesting characters, they were so much fun to illustrate—from the Rat King’s swarming army of rats to Bogarte’s fedora, which has been modified to accommodate his horns. For the cover, I wanted to create something that was quite graphic and bold. At first glance it looks like a spiral, but when you look closer you can see that it’s hundreds of rats!

This has been a really successful collaboration. What was it like working together and might we see more pieces from this team?

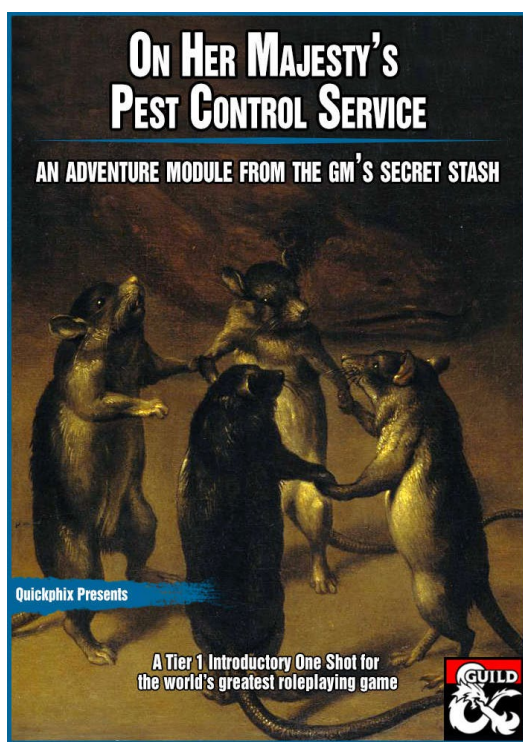
WD: We have had a few calls for a sequel to *Rats of Waterdeep*! It's always a pleasure working with Lysa, so I'd never say never. Personally, I'd love to see the further adventures of Watchman Bogarte Locks!

SA: I second that! More tales from the casebook of Bogarte Locks would be awesome!

Rats of Waterdeep is available now **from the DMs Guild** with an MSRP of \$4.95.

RATS, RATS, AND MORE RATS

It's said you're never more than six feet away from a rat in a city, although a **truer estimate** seems to be fifty meters (164 feet). That's in a modern urban area, however. The poorly protected food stores required to feed a large population, combined with the less-than-adequate sewer system likely to be found in a fantasy setting, mean catching rats could be the first job any new adventuring party carries out—whether that's by choice or at her majesty's pleasure.



On Her Majesty's Pest Control Service, by Quickphix Club
Price: Pay What You Want (PDF)

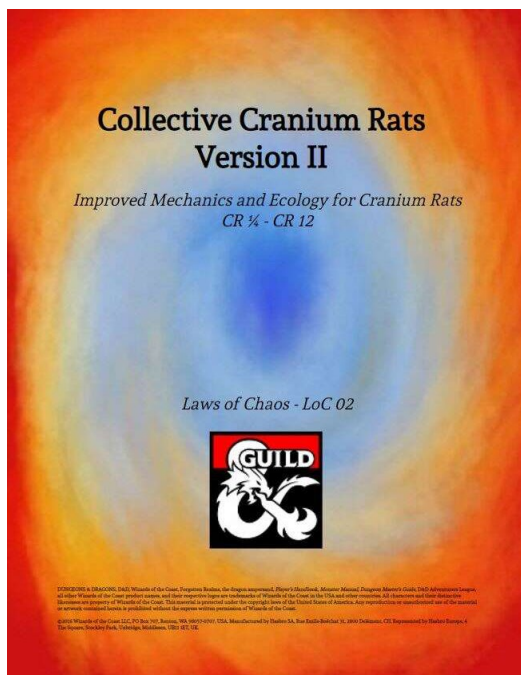
This scenario, which is aimed at new players taking their first steps into the world of TTRPGs, immediately sets the right tone, as it quotes a children's rhyme:

"Squish one, it's fun; squish two, this won't do; squish three, they don't flee; squish four, there's even more; squish five, you may yet survive; squish six, they know your tricks; squish seven, on your way to heaven; squish eight, now it's too late; squish nine, they

crawl up your spine; squish ten, you'll never squish again." In the classic start to a new game the party finds themselves sitting in a cell,

imprisoned for various crimes. The sentence? Reformation via extermination. So begins their task to collect a seemingly impossible four barrels' worth of dead rats.

MORE INFO



Collective Cranium Rats Version
II, by Daniel Chivers
Price: \$1.87 (PDF)

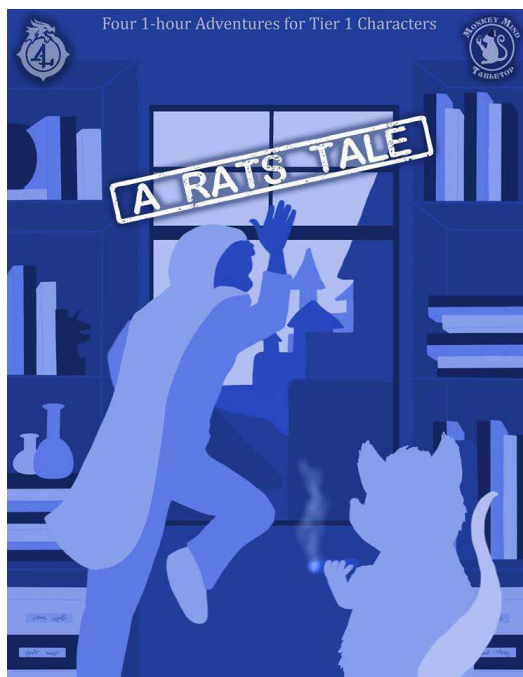
A normal rat kills to defend itself or to eat; collective cranium rats kill out of boredom and a desire for excitement. And a collective will always ambush its prey. This interesting take on swarm mechanics uses a power called “psionic damage sink” to allow cranium rats to share temporary hit points. This pool of hit points must be reduced to zero before a single individual rat takes any

damage, making this a potentially lethal enemy when scaled up. Author Daniel Chivers includes combat-ready enemies ranging from eight rats up to twenty-two for immediate use in a campaign.

MORE INFO

The Rat and The Halflings, by
Roddhill Gaming
Price: Pay What You Want (PDF)

This simple tale of rats getting fed up with being hunted and hiring a party of adventurers to get rid of their exterminator nemesis is an RPG side quest we'd happily



accept! What we love about this particular rat colony is the importance it might play beyond this scenario. This family of rats was awakened by the druid Girwed Ingotaxe and their consciousness is passed onto their

children. Using their new-found intelligence they have founded an organization to smuggle goods around the city. If moonrats make plans once a month when their IQ is boosted, imagine what this group could get up to? They could even be a powerful ally in your urban adventures.

MORE INFO

DESIGN THOUGHT: ANIMAL ACTIVITIES

As we've seen with the extreme example of moonrats earlier in this issue, animals may have certain times when they behave more unusually. This can even be true of regular, non-fantasy beasts. Is it salmon migration season, meaning the bears are much more territorial about the stretch of river they live next to? Is it mating season, meaning creatures such as stags who would usually shun contact suddenly display more aggressive behaviors? Or has a species of big cat given birth and the parents will do anything to stop the party walking into the bushes where they lie? Just because an animal is regularly spotted in the wild doesn't mean it will react the same way every time. It's good to spice things up occasionally and surprise even the seasoned travelers in your party.



BACK TO TOP

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

Red Dragon

Beholder

Owlbear

Acererak the Lich

Half-elf Ranger

Dwarf Paladin

Human Fighter

Tiefling Rogue

Take a Blind Bag Chance,
for an Adventure that's Yours!

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Unearthed Arcana:Subclasses, Parts One, Two & Three

Sharing new playtest possibilities for the
barbarian, monk, paladin, warlock, bard, cleric,
and sorcerer.

Ben Petrisor, Dan Dillon, Bill Benham, Adam Lee, Jeremy Crawford, and F. Wesley
Schneider



Playtest Material

The material here is presented for playtesting and to spark your imagination. These game mechanics are in draft form, usable in your campaign but not refined by final game development and editing. They aren't officially part of the game and aren't permitted in D&D Adventurers League events.

If we decide to make this material official, it will be refined based on your feedback, and then it will appear in a D&D book.

Unearthed Arcana leaps into 2020 with seven new subclasses for you to try out: The Path of the Beast for the barbarian; the Way of Mercy for the monk; the Oath of the Watchers for the paladin; the Noble Genie for the warlock; the College of Creation for the bard; the Unity Domain for the cleric; the Clockwork Soul for the sorcerer; the Armorer for the artificer; Circle of the Stars for the druid; and Fey Wanderer for the ranger.

Path of the Beast



Barbarians who walk this path draw their rage from a bestial spark burning within their souls. That beast howls to be released and bursts forth in the throes of rage. A 3rd-level barbarian entering a rage can transform, revealing the bestial power within them by manifesting a natural melee weapon. As the feral spirit within grows in power, these natural weapons count as magical for the purpose of overcoming resistance and immunity to nonmagical attacks and damage.

At higher levels the spirit within can curse a target with rabid fury, forcing them to use their reaction to make a melee attack against another creature, or to take 2d12 psychic damage. The barbarian's ferocity can also extend to willing allies, bestowing the Reckless Attack feature upon them while the raging character enjoys bonuses such as temporary hit points and advantage on saving throws against being frightened.

Those who tread this path might be inhabited by a primal spirit or descended from shapeshifters. They can choose the origin of their feral might or determine it randomly by rolling a d4 on the Origin of the Beast table:

- 1 One of your parents is a lycanthrope, and you've inherited some of the curse.
 - 2 You are descended from a legendary druid, a fact manifested by your ability to partially change shape.
 - 3 A fey spirit gifted you with the ability to adopt different bestial aspects.
 - 4 An ancient animal spirit dwells within you, allowing you to walk this path.
-

Way of Mercy



Monks of the Way of Mercy learn to manipulate the life force of others to bring aid to those in need. They are wandering physicians to the poor and hurt. However, to those beyond their help—whether ailing or evil—they bring a swift end as an act of mercy.

At 3rd level they gain proficiency in either the Insight or Medicine skill, as well as with both the herbalism kit and the poisoner's kit. Their mystical touch can also mend wounds as an action, spending a ki point to restore a number of hit points (they can also replace one of the unarmed strikes in Flurry of Blows to use this feature without spending its ki cost). Conversely, Hands of Harm allow them to use their ki to inflict wounds.

At 6th level they can spend a ki point to create a noxious aura, causing ranged attacks to be carried out with disadvantage and poisoning those within five feet. At higher levels their healing touch can also end one disease or cure a target who is blinded, deafened, paralyzed, or poisoned, eventually being able to place a target into a state of suspended animation similar to death.

The walkers of this way usually don simple robes with deep cowls, and they often conceal their faces with masks, presenting themselves as the faceless bringers of life and death. They can choose this

mask's appearance or determine it randomly by rolling a d6 on the Merciful Mask table:

- 1 Raven mask
 - 2 Blank and white mask
 - 3 Crying visage mask
 - 4 Laughing visage mask
 - 5 Skull mask
 - 6 Butterfly mask
-

Oath of the Watchers



A paladin who assumes the Oath of the Watchers swears to safeguard the mortal realm from otherworldly threats. The key tenets of their beliefs are: Vigilance; Loyalty; and Discipline. They gain additional oath spells as they progress in experience, at 3rd (*alarm*, *chromatic orb*), 5th (*augury*, *moonbeam*), 9th (*counterspell*, *nondetection*), 13th (*aura of purity*, *banishment*), and 17th levels (*hold monster*, *hallow*).

At 3rd level an Oath of the Watchers paladin gains two additional Channel Divinity options: Watcher's Will and Abjure the Extraplanar. This allows them to ward allies and give them advantage on Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma saving throws, or turn beings such as elementals, fey, fiends, or aberrations.

At higher levels they can boost the initiative bonus of multiple targets, deal damage to a creature when an ally succeeds on a saving throw, and manifest a spark of their deity's power to aid them in battle against otherworldly foes.

Noble Genie



A warlock choosing this Otherworldly Patron option has made a pact with one of the rarest of geniekind, a noble genie. Such entities are rulers of vast fiefs on the Elemental Planes and have great influence over lesser genies and elemental creatures.

Noble genies are varied in their motivations but are all arrogant collectors of creatures, knowledge, and treasure. A genie values their collection and will protect that

which they claim ownership over. Through your connection to the noble, you can leverage their influence and extend their ownership of things in the multiverse.

A Noble Genie warlock is gifted a magical vessel which becomes their spellcasting focus. They can use this item to tether themselves to another creature and gain a bonus to perception, as well as casting spells from that creature's location. They also choose from an expanded list of spells at 1st (*fog cloud*, *sleep*), 2nd (*enlarge/reduce*, *phantasmal force*), 3rd (*create food and water*, *protection from*

energy), 4th (*polymorph*, *phantasmal killer*), and 5th levels (*Bigby's hand*, *creation*).

At higher levels a Noble Genie patron can also grant protection from chosen elements, aid a warlock in protecting their tethered creature (or vice versa), teleport targets into its court in the Elemental Planes and temporarily share more of their power.

The College of Creation

A bard joins the College of Creation using the 3rd level Bardic College feature. Bards of this college believe the multiverse was given existence through word and sound, and that these esoteric



harmonies continue to resound through existence as the Song of Creation. Their performances use this ancient power to bring into being whatever they need most. Other performers may be drawn to them—either to

learn their secrets or to put an end to their dangerous manipulation of

the Song of Creation.

At 3rd level a College of Creation bard can use a Bardic Inspiration to summon a floating musical note of possibility. The note orbits within five feet of a creature until the Bardic Inspiration die is used or lost and is intangible and invulnerable. It can be used in a number of ways: to boost an attack roll and also damage every creature within five feet of the user; to boost a saving throw and gain temporary hit points; or to boost an ability check and allow the Bardic Inspiration die to be rolled again, with the higher role being taken.

At 6th-level a College of Creation bard can use Animating Performance to magically bring items to life. These Large or smaller nonmagical items use the Dancing Item stat block and are under the bard's control for one hour or until the item's hit points are reduced to zero.

A 14th-level bard enrolled in this college can also use the Performance of Creation feature to briefly transform the world around them. This creates one nonmagical

item of their choice, such as might be found on the Armor, Weapons, Adventuring

Gear, Tools, and Mounts and Vehicles tables (see chapter 5, Equipment, in the *Player's Handbook*). Tiny glimmering, intangible

notes float around the created item and it disappears at the end of your next turn unless you use your action to maintain it. Each time you use your action in this way, the item's duration is extended to the end of your next turn, up to a maximum of one minute. If you maintain the item for a full minute, it continues to exist for a number of hours equal to your bard level.

The Unity Domain



Some deities delight in the oneness that shines at the heart of healthy communities, whether bound together by friendship, blood, faith, or some other force. Clerics of these gods preside over marriages and other familial bonding customs, as well as nurturing the emotional bonds of friendship and camaraderie. Their divine blessings bolster and

protect allies in battle through these deep bonds and turn aside malign influences.

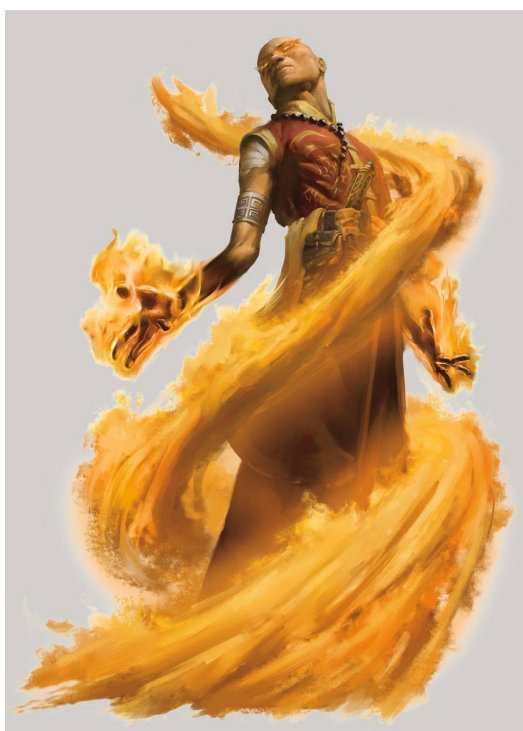
A cleric of the Unity Domain gains additional spells as they progress in experience, at 1st (*heroism*, *shield of faith*), 3rd (*aid*, *warding bond*), 5th (*beacon of hope*, *sending*), 7th (*aura of purity*, *guardian of faith*), and 9th levels (*greater restoration*, *Rary's telepathic Bond*).

A 1st level cleric in this domain also gains Emboldening Bond and can forge a connection between two willing allies. As long as they are within 30 feet of each other those allies can roll a d4 and add that number to an attack roll, an ability check, or a saving throw once per turn. At higher levels Emboldening Bond can be used to allow one creature to grant resistance to all damage to its ally when that creature takes damage.

At 2nd-level a Unity Domain cleric can also protect allies using their Channel Divinity power. When they see an ally within 30 feet of them take damage, they can use their reaction to share that damage between a number of other willing allies. And at 17th-level they can use Enduring Unity to have the effects of their other powers

maintained as long as the allies are on the same plane of existence. When one of them is reduced to zero hit points, the bonded partner also gains: advantage on attack rolls, ability checks, and saving throws; has resistance to all damage; and can touch their bonded partner to expend and roll any number of Hit Dice to have them regain that number of hit points. Those benefits last for one minute, or until the ally regains at least one hit point.

The Clockwork Soul



A sorcerer may take Clockwork Soul as their Sorcerous Origin feature at 1st level. They have a connection to the realm of Mechanus, which is overseen by a godlike entity called Primus. This connection manifests itself when the sorcerer casts a spell and a player may choose the appearance of this effect or determine it randomly by rolling a d6 on the Manifestations of Mechanus table:

- 1 Large, spectral cogwheels appear hovering behind you.
- 2 The hands of a clock appear in your eyes.
- 3 Your skin glows with a golden, metallic sheen.
- 4 Your features become unnaturally angular, like geometric objects.
- 5 Your spellcasting focus takes the form of a miniature Spawning Stone or other creation of Primus.
- 6 The ringing of a clock can be heard by you and those affected by your magic.

They also gain additional spells as they progress in experience, at 1st (*alarm*, *protection from evil and good*), 3rd (*find traps*, *heat metal*), 5th (*counterspell*, *glyph of warding*), 7th (*arcane eye*, *Otiluke's resilient sphere*), and 9th levels (*animate objects*, *wall of force*). These spells don't count against the number of sorcerer spells known and they can't be replaced when a level is gained in this class.

A 1st-level Clockwork Soul sorcerer gains Restore Balance, which allows them to equalize chaotic moments. This uses a reaction to prevent a d20 roll by a creature in sight from being affected by advantage or disadvantage. At 6th level they can also expend sorcery points to create a magical ward around themselves or another creature that prevents damage.

At 14th-level a Clockwork Soul sorcerer can use Trance of Order to enter a state of clockwork consciousness. While in this state, which last for one minute, attack rolls against them can't benefit from advantage, and whenever they make an attack roll, ability check, or saving throw they can treat a d20 roll of nine or lower as a ten on the dice.

At 18th-level they can also use Clockwork Cavalcade to summon spirits that look like modrons or other constructs. This 30-foot cube of spirits can restore up to one hundred hit points (divided among any number of creatures), repair damaged objects, and end every spell of 6th level or lower.

Armorer



An Armorer is an artificer who specializes in modifying armor to function almost like a second skin. The artificer bonds with this armor and it hones their magic, unleashing potent attacks and generating formidable defenses.

At 3rd level an artificer gains proficiency with heavy armor and smith's tools.

They learn to turn armor into a conduit for their magic, using an action to turn the suit of heavy armor they are wearing into power armor. This removes the Strength Requirement from the armor, allows it to act as a spellcasting focus and even substitute for missing limbs, functioning as the body part it is replacing. The armor can be

customized to either the guardian or infiltrator model during a rest.

Armorsmiths also always have certain spells prepared as they progress in experience, at 3rd (*magic missile, shield*), 5th (*mirror image, shatter*), 9th (*hypnotic pattern, lightning bolt*), 13th (*fire shield, greater invisibility*), and 17th levels (*passwall, wall of force*). At 5th-level they can attack twice whenever they take the Attack action on their turn.

At 9th-level an Armorsmith learns how to use their artificer infusions to specially modify the Power Armor. They can imbue the chest piece, boots, bracers, and a weapon individually with an infusion. Special artificer infusions for this class include Armor of Tools for integrating tools directly into the armor, Mind Sharpener to help maintain concentration on a spell, Spell-Refueling Ring to recover an expended spell slot (6th level), Magical Strength to use their Intelligence modifier in place of Strength (10th level), and Helm of Awareness for advantage on initiative rolls and the ability to never be surprised (10th level).

At 15th-level an Armorsmith's power armor gains additional benefits based on its model: Guardian armor gains a powerful force to pull an individual in battle; Infiltrator armor glimmers with light to deal lightning damage.

Circle of the Stars



This ancient lineage of druids draw on the power of starlight. They have tracked heavenly patterns since time immemorial, discovering secrets hidden amid the constellations. By revealing and understanding these secrets, they seek to harness the powers of the cosmos. They may keep detailed records, documenting their observations at megalithic sites durable enough to protect the sacred knowledge even against a great cataclysm.

A 2nd level druid of the Circle of Stars creates a tiny star map that can serve as a spellcasting focus. They can cast the *augury* and *guiding bolt* spells without expending a spell slot and without preparing the spell using this spell focus, regaining expended uses of this ability following a long rest. They can choose what form the object takes or determine it randomly by rolling a d6 on the Star Map table.

- 1 A scroll of living wood that aligns with heavenly bodies.
- 2 A stone tablet with fine holes drilled through it.
- 3 A speckled owlbear hide, tooled with raised marks.
- 4 A collection of maps bound in an ebony cover.
- 5 A crystal that projects starry patterns when placed before a light.
- 6 Tempered glass disks that align to depict constellations.

A 2nd-level Circle of the Stars druid can use the Wild Shape feature to transform into a starry form. Their body takes on a luminous, star-like quality and sheds bright light in a 10-foot radius and dim light for an additional 10 feet. Whenever they assume this starry form, they may choose which constellation glimmers on their body: Chalice (restore hit points to a second target when you cast a healing spell); Archer (gain a ranged spell attack as a bonus action); or Dragon (treat a Intelligence or Wisdom check or a Constitution saving throw result as a 10 on the d20). At a higher level this starry form can make the druid partially incorporeal, giving them resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage.

At 6th-level a Circle of the Stars druid can consult their star map for omens and divine the will of the cosmos. Roll a d6 following a long rest: on an even result use a reaction to roll a d6 and add the number to the attack roll, saving throw, or ability check of a creature you can see within 30 feet; on an odd result subtract a d6 in the same circumstances.

At 14th-level their connection to the cosmos allows them to conjure brilliant starlight. This burst of light in a 30-foot-radius can teleport willing creatures to an

unoccupied space, while those remaining within this sphere of light must succeed on a Constitution saving throw or take 4d10 radiant damage and be blinded.

Fey Wanderer



A Fey Wanderer ranger guards the border between the Feywild and the Material Plane, guiding the lost out of the Feywild and preventing dangerous fey from damaging the Material Plane. Their experience with both domains makes them an exceptional negotiator between inhabitants of these worlds, as they understand both humanoid mindsets and the wiles of the fey courts. Fey Wanderers possess a preternatural blessing from a fey ally or a place of fey power. They can choose this blessing or

determine it randomly by rolling a d6 on the Feywild Gifts table.

- 1 Illusory butterflies flutter around you while you take a short or long rest.
- 2 Fresh, seasonal flowers sprout from your hair each dawn.
- 3 You faintly smell of cinnamon, lavender, nutmeg, or another comforting herb or spice.
- 4 Your shadow dances while no one is looking directly at it.
- 5 Delicate horns or antlers sprout from your head.
- 6 Your skin and hair change color to match the season at each dawn.

A ranger can gain this archetype at 3rd level and immediately gains proficiency in their choice of Deception, Performance, or Persuasion, while also gaining advantage on saving throws against being charmed or frightened. They also gain additional spells from this level: at 3rd (*charm person*), 5th (*misty step*), 9th (*dispel magic*), 13th (*banishment*), and 17th (*mislead*).

At 3rd level they also begin to augment their attacks with mind-scarring magic, using a bonus action to charge a weapon and deal an extra 1d6 psychic damage on a hit. At 7th-level they can expend a

spell slot to deal this extra damage on a hit.

An 11th-level Fey Wanderer learns how to manipulate mind-altering magic, channeling it from their allies to affect others within 120 feet. The effects are to charm or frighten a target for one minute when another creature saves against being charmed or frightened. At 15th level they can also magically remove themselves from one creature's perception for 24 hours.

Access the new playtest options for the barbarian, monk, paladin and warlock by downloading the PDF.

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BACK TO TOP

UNEARTHED ARCANA 2020

Subclasses, Part 1

This document provides subclass options for the barbarian, monk, paladin, and warlock.

This Is Playtest Material

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If we decide to make this material official, it will be refined based on your feedback, and then it will appear in a D&D book.

Barbarian

At 3rd level, a barbarian gains the Primal Path feature. Here is a playtest option for that feature: the Path of the Beast.

Path of the Beast

Barbarians who walk the Path of Beast draw their rage from a bestial spark burning within their souls. That beast howls to be released and bursts forth in the throes of rage.

Those who tread this path might be inhabited by a primal spirit or descended from shapeshifters. You can choose the origin of your feral might or determine it randomly by rolling on the Origin of the Beast table.

Origin of the Beast

d4 Origin

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 | One of your parents is a lycanthrope, and you've inherited some of the curse. |
| 2 | You are descended from a legendary druid, a fact manifested by your ability to partially change shape. |
| 3 | A fey spirit gifted you with the ability to adopt different bestial aspects. |
| 4 | An ancient animal spirit dwells within you, allowing you to walk this path. |

Form of the Beast

3rd-level Path of the Beast feature

When you enter your rage, you can transform, revealing the bestial power within you. Until

your rage ends, you manifest a natural melee weapon, choosing one of the following options each time you rage:

Bite. Your mouth transforms into a bestial snout or great mandibles (your choice). Your bite deals 1d8 piercing damage on a hit. Once on each of your turns when you damage a creature with your bite, you regain a number of hit points equal to your Constitution modifier (minimum of 1 hit point).

Claws. Your hands transform into claws, which deal 1d6 slashing damage on a hit. When you take the Attack action on your turn and make an attack with your claws, you can make one additional attack using your claws as part of the same action.

Tail. You grow a lashing, spiny tail, which deals 1d12 piercing damage on a hit and has the reach property.

Bestial Soul

6th-level Path of the Beast feature

The feral spirit within you grows in power, causing the natural weapons of your Form of the Beast to count as magical for the purpose of overcoming resistance and immunity to nonmagical attacks and damage.

You can also call on the feral spirit to help you adapt to your surroundings. When you finish a short or long rest, choose one of the following benefits, which lasts until you finish a short or long rest:

- You gain a swimming speed equal to your walking speed, and you can breathe underwater.
- You gain a climbing speed equal to your walking speed, and you can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.
- When you jump, you can make a Strength (Athletics) check and extend your jump by a number of feet equal to the check's total. You can make this special check only once per turn.

Rule Tip: Jumping Costs Movement

When you jump, every foot you clear on the jump costs a foot of your movement on the current turn. When a class feature, a spell, or another effect extends your jump, the bonus feet also cost movement. For more about jumping, see chapter 8 in the *Player's Handbook*.

Infectious Fury

10th-level Path of the Beast feature

When you hit a creature with your natural weapons while you are raging, the spirit within you can curse your target with rabid fury. The target must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw (DC equal to 8 + your Constitution modifier + your proficiency bonus) or suffer one of the following effects (your choice):

- The target must use its reaction to make a melee attack against another creature of your choice that you can see.
- Target takes 2d12 psychic damage.

You can use this feature a number of times equal to your Constitution modifier (a minimum of once). You regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Call the Hunt

14th-level Path of the Beast feature

The beast within grows so powerful that you can spread its ferocity to your allies. When you enter your rage, you can choose a number of willing creatures you can see within 30 feet of you equal to your Constitution modifier (minimum of one creature). Until your rage ends, the chosen creatures gain the Reckless Attack feature and you have advantage on saving throws against being frightened. You also gain 5 temporary hit points for each creature that accepts the benefit.

You can use this feature a number of times equal to your Constitution modifier (a minimum of once). You regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Rule Tip: Temporary Hit Points Don't Stack

If you have temporary hit points and receive more of them, you don't add them together, unless a rule says you can. Instead, you decide which temporary hit points to keep. For more information on temporary hit points, see chapter 9 of the *Player's Handbook*.

Monk

At 3rd level, a monk gains the Monastic Tradition feature. Here is a playtest option for that feature: the Way of Mercy.

Way of Mercy

Monks of the Way of Mercy learn to manipulate the life force of others to bring aid to those in need. They are wandering physicians to the poor and hurt. However, to those beyond their help—whether ailing or evil—they bring a swift end as an act of mercy.

Those who follow the Way of Mercy might be humble members of a religious order, administering to those in greatest need, making grim choices rooted in reality rather than idealism. Some might be gentle-voiced healers, beloved by their communities, while others might be masked bringers of macabre mercies.

The walkers of this way usually don simple robes with deep cowls, and they often conceal their faces with masks, presenting themselves as the faceless bringers of life and death. If you wear a mask, choose its appearance, or determine it randomly by rolling on the Merciful Mask table.

Merciful Mask

| d6 | Mask Appearance |
|----|-----------------|
| 1 | Raven |
| 2 | Blank and white |
| 3 | Crying visage |
| 4 | Laughing visage |
| 5 | Skull |
| 6 | Butterfly |

Implements of Mercy

3rd-level Way of Mercy feature

You gain proficiency in the Insight or Medicine skill (your choice), and you gain proficiency with the herbalism kit and the poisoner's kit.

Hands of Healing

3rd-level Way of Mercy feature

Your mystical touch can mend wounds. As an action, you can spend 1 ki point to touch a creature and restore a number of hit points equal to a roll of your Martial Arts die + your Wisdom modifier.

When you use your Flurry of Blows, you can

replace one of the unarmed strikes with a use of this feature without spending its ki cost.

Hands of Harm

3rd-level Way of Mercy feature

You use your ki to inflict wounds. When you hit a creature with an unarmed strike, you can spend 1 ki point to deal extra necrotic damage equal to one roll of your Martial Arts die. If the creature is incapacitated or poisoned, the creature instead takes necrotic damage equal to three rolls of your Martial Arts die instead. You can use this feature only once on each of your turns.

Noxious Aura

6th-level Way of Mercy feature

As a bonus action, you spend 1 ki point to turn your ki into an aura of toxic miasma. The aura extends 5 feet from you in every direction, but not through total cover. It lasts for 1 minute, until you're incapacitated, or you dismiss it (no action required).

While your aura is active, ranged attacks have disadvantage against you. Any other creature that starts its turn in the aura must succeed on a Constitution saving throw or become poisoned until the end of your next turn and take poison damage equal to your Wisdom modifier (minimum of 0 damage).

Healing Technique

11th-level Way of Mercy feature

Your skill in manipulating your ki to heal increases. When you restore hit points to a creature using your Hands of Healing, you can also end one disease or a condition from the following list affecting the target: blinded, deafened, paralyzed, or poisoned.

Hand of Mercy

17th-level Way of Mercy feature

Your mastery of life energy opens the door to the ultimate respite technique. As an action, you can touch a creature, expend 4 ki points, and force the creature to make a Constitution saving throw (a creature can willingly fail this save). Unless the save succeeds, the creature enters a state of suspended animation for a number of days equal to your monk level or until you end the effect early (no action required). During this time, the creature is paralyzed, has immunity to all

damage, and any curse, disease, or poison affecting it is suspended. The creature appears dead to all outward inspection and to spells used to determine the creature's status.

You can have only one creature under the effect of this feature at a time.

Rule Tip: You're a Creature

A creature is anything that belongs to one of the creature types listed in the introduction of the *Monster Manual*. Player characters—including your character—are all creatures, and most of them are humanoids, one of the game's types.

Paladin

At 3rd level, a paladin gains the Sacred Oath feature. Here is a playtest option for that feature: the Oath of the Watchers.

Oath of the Watchers

Paladins who vow the Oath of the Watchers seek to protect the mortal realm from the predations of extraplanar creatures, many of which can lay waste to mortal soldiers. Thus, the Watchers hone their minds, spirits, and bodies to be the ultimate weapons against such threats.

Paladins who follow the Watchers' oath are ever vigilant in spotting the influence of extraplanar forces, often establishing a network of spies and informants to gather information on suspected cults. To a Watcher, keeping a healthy suspicion and awareness about one's surroundings is as natural as wearing armor in battle.

Tenets of the Watchers

A paladin who assumes the Oath of the Watchers swears to safeguard the mortal realm from otherworldly threats.

Vigilance. The threats you face are cunning, powerful, and subversive. Be ever alert for their corruption.

Loyalty. Never accept gifts or favors from fiends or those who truck with them. Stay true to your order, your comrades, and your duty.

Discipline. You are the shield against the endless terrors that lie beyond the stars. Your blade must be forever sharp and your mind keen to survive what lies beyond.

Oath Spells

3rd-level Oath of the Watchers feature

You gain oath spells at the paladin levels listed in the Oath of the Watchers table. See the Sacred Oath class feature for how oath spells work.

Oath of the Watchers Spells

| Paladin Level | Spells |
|---------------|-----------------------------------|
| 3rd | <i>alarm, chromatic orb</i> |
| 5th | <i>augury, moonbeam</i> |
| 9th | <i>counterspell, nondetection</i> |
| 13th | <i>aura of purity, banishment</i> |
| 17th | <i>hold monster, hallow</i> |

Channel Divinity

3rd-level Oath of the Watchers feature

You gain the following Channel Divinity options. See the Sacred Oath class feature for how Channel Divinity works.

Watcher's Will. You can use your Channel Divinity to invest your presence with the warding power of your faith. As an action, you can choose a number of creatures you can see within 30 feet of you, up to a number equal to your Charisma modifier (minimum of one creature). For 1 minute, all the chosen creatures have advantage on Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma saving throws.

Abjure the Extraplanar. You can use your Channel Divinity to castigate unworldly beings. As an action, you present your holy symbol and each elemental, fey, fiend, or aberration within 30 feet of you that can hear you must make a Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, the creature is turned for 1 minute or until it takes damage.

A turned creature must spend its turns trying to move as far away from you as it can, and it can't willingly move to a space within 30 feet of you. For its action, it can use only the Dash action or try to escape from an effect that prevents it from moving. If there's nowhere to move, the creature can use the Dodge action.

Aura of the Sentinel

7th- and 18th-level Oath of the Watchers feature

You emit an aura of alertness while you aren't incapacitated. When you and any creature of your choice within 10 feet of you rolls initiative, you each gain a bonus to initiative equal to your Charisma modifier (minimum of +1).

At 18th level, the range of this aura increases to 30 feet.

Vigilant Rebuke

15th-level Oath of the Watchers feature

You've learned how to magically chastise anyone who dares cast unwanted spells at you and your wards. Whenever you or a creature you can see within 30 feet of you succeeds on a saving throw against a spell, you can use your reaction to deal 2d8 + your Charisma modifier force damage to the spellcaster.

Mortal Bulwark

20th-level Oath of the Watchers feature

You manifest a spark of your deity's power in defense of your sacred oath. As a bonus action, you gain the following benefits for 1 minute:

- You gain truesight in a 120-foot radius.
- You have advantage on attack rolls against elementals, fey, fiends, and aberrations.
- When you hit a creature with an attack and deal damage to it, you can also force it to make a Charisma saving throw. On a failed save, the creature is magically banished to its native plane of existence if it's currently not there. On a successful save, the creature can't be banished by this feature for 24 hours.

Once you use this bonus action, you can't use it again until you finish a long rest.

Warlock

At 1st level, a warlock gains the Otherworldly Patron feature. Here is a playtest option for that feature: the Noble Genie.

The Noble Genie

You made a pact with one of the rarest of geniekind, a noble genie. Such entities are rulers of vast fiefs on the Elemental Planes and have great influence over lesser genies and elemental creatures. Noble genies are varied in their motivations but are all arrogant collectors of creatures, knowledge, and treasure. A genie values their collection and will protect that which they claim ownership over. Through your connection to the noble, you can leverage their

influence and extend their ownership of things in the multiverse.

Expanded Spell List

1st-level Noble Genie feature

The Noble Genie lets you choose from an expanded list of spells when you learn a warlock spell. The following spells are added to the warlock spell list for you.

Noble Genie Expanded Spells

| Spell Level | Spells |
|-------------|--|
| 1st | <i>fog cloud, sleep</i> |
| 2nd | <i>enlarge/reduce, phantasmal force</i> |
| 3rd | <i>create food and water, protection from energy</i> |
| 4th | <i>polymorph, phantasmal killer</i> |
| 5th | <i>Bigby's hand, creation</i> |

Collector's Vessel

1st-level Noble Genie feature

Your patron gives you a magical vessel with which you can bind a creature to you and to your patron's menagerie. The vessel is a Tiny object, and it is a spellcasting focus for you. You decide what the object is, or you can determine what it is randomly by rolling on the Collector's Vessel table.

Collector's Vessel

| d6 | Vessel |
|----|-------------------------|
| 1 | Oil lamp |
| 2 | Urn |
| 3 | Ring with a compartment |
| 4 | Stoppered bottle |
| 5 | Hollow statuette |
| 6 | Ornate lantern |

If you lose your vessel, you can perform a 1-hour ceremony to receive a replacement from your patron. This ceremony can be performed during a short or long rest, and it destroys the previous vessel. The vessel vanishes in a flare of elemental power when you die.

As an action while you are holding the vessel, you target a willing creature you can see within 100 feet of you and create a tether of wispy elemental material that links the target to you. The tether lasts for 1 hour, until you use this feature to create another tether, until the bound target is reduced to 0 hit points, or until the target ends its turn more than 100 feet from you.

While you are tethered to a creature, you gain the following benefits:

- You gain a bonus to your Wisdom (Perception) checks equal to your Charisma modifier (minimum of +1).
- When you can cast a spell, you can deliver the spell from your space or the bound creature's space.

You can create the tether a number of times equal to your Charisma modifier (minimum of once), and you regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Collector's Vessel and Pact Boons

When you create a tether with your Collector's Vessel, the tether takes on a form that reflects your patron's type of geniekind: swirling mist and wind for a djinni, sand and flecks of rock or gems for a dao, smoke and embers for an efreeti, and foamy water for a marid.

When you gain the Pact Boon feature at 3rd level, if you choose a boon that grants you a physical object, your vessel transforms into that object. For example, a warlock whose patron is a noble efreeti and chooses the Pact of the Tome might find their bottle transformed into an elaborate scroll made of a red dragon's wing, with brass and iron rolling rods.

Elemental Resistance

6th-level Noble Genie feature

Your patron grants you protection from an element. Whenever you finish a long rest, you gain resistance to acid, cold, fire, or lightning damage (your choice) until the end of your next long rest.

While the tether of your Collector's Vessel is active, the tethered creature gains resistance to the damage type you chose.

Protective Wish

10th-level Noble Genie feature

You're now able to use your Collector's Vessel to wish for protection for yourself or your tethered creature. If you or the tethered creature is hit by an attack, you can use your reaction to teleport, swapping places with the creature and switching which one of you is hit by the attack.

Genie's Entertainment

10th-level Noble Genie feature

As an action, you attempt to send a creature you can see within 90 feet to your patron's court. The target must succeed on a Charisma saving throw against your warlock spell save DC or be magically drawn into your vessel and teleported to your patron's court in the Elemental Planes. While there, the target is stunned and your patron marvels at the target with amusement but brings no harm to it. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, reappearing in the space it left or in the nearest unoccupied space if that space is occupied on a success.

Once you use this feature, you can't use it again until you finish a long rest. If the target remains in your patron's court for 1 minute, the genie sends the target back at the end of its turn as if it successfully saved, and you regain the use of this feature.

Collector's Call

14th-level Noble Genie feature

In exchange for extending your patron's influence over the multiverse, you can call on more of their power. As an action, you can implore your patron for aid by making a Charisma (Persuasion) check against your warlock spell save DC. If the check succeeds, you can choose one of the following effects:

- A creature you can see within 60 feet of you regains 8d6 hit points and ends one disease or condition afflicting it: blinded, charmed, deafened, frightened, paralyzed, or poisoned.
- A creature you can see within 60 feet of you has disadvantage on attack rolls and saving throws until the start of your next turn.
- You cast the *legend lore* spell without material components.

Whether the check succeeds or fails, you can't use this feature again until you finish a long rest. Alternatively, you can regain the use of this feature by sacrificing nonmagical treasure worth at least 500 gp to your patron. This sacrifice requires the treasure to be within 10 feet of you for at least 1 minute, at the end of which you use an action to teleport the treasure to your patron's realm, provided you have the vessel of your Collector's Vessel in hand.

UNEARTHED ARCANA 2020

Subclasses, Part 2

This document provides subclass options for the bard, cleric, and sorcerer.

This Is Playtest Material

The material in this article is presented for playtesting and to spark your imagination. These game mechanics are in draft form, usable in your campaign but not refined by full game design and editing. They aren't officially part of the game and aren't permitted in D&D Adventurers League events.

If we decide to make this material official, it will be refined based on your feedback, and then it will appear in a D&D book.

Bard

At 3rd level, a bard gains the Bardic College feature. Here is a playtest option for that feature: the College of Creation.

College of Creation

Bards believe the multiverse was given existence through word and sound, esoteric harmonies that continue to resound through existence: the Song of Creation. The bards of this college draw on this ancient power through performances of dance, music, or song to bring into being what they need most.

Members of this college might have developed their powers during experiences on other worlds or planes of existence. Those who have seen the commonalities of multiple realities might have learned how to tap into truths most mortals glimpse only for a moment. Alternatively, the bard might find themselves out of step with their own home plane, reality, or time, their connections to elsewhere allowing them to manipulate the space around them. Regardless of where a bard draws their powers from, other performers might be drawn to them, either to learn their secrets or to put an end to their dangerous manipulation of the Song of Creation.

Note of Potential

3rd-level College of Creation feature

You can manipulate the Song of Creation to summon a floating musical note of possibility:

Whenever you give a creature a Bardic Inspiration die, you can create a Note of Potential. The note orbits within 5 feet of the creature. The note is a Tiny object that is intangible and invulnerable, and it lasts until the Bardic Inspiration die is lost. A creature with a note can use it in the following ways.

Note of Destruction. Immediately after the creature rolls the Bardic Inspiration die to add it to an attack roll, the creature can expend the note to create a burst of sound. Each other creature within 5 feet of it must succeed on a Constitution saving throw against your spell save DC or take thunder damage equal to the number rolled on the Bardic Inspiration die.

Note of Protection. Immediately after the creature rolls the Bardic Inspiration die and adds it to a saving throw, the creature can expend the note to gain temporary hit points equal to the number rolled on the Bardic Inspiration die + your Charisma modifier, provided the creature doesn't already have temporary hit points.

Note of Ingenuity. When the creature rolls the Bardic Inspiration die to add it to an ability check, the creature can expend the note to roll the Bardic Inspiration die again and choose which roll to use.

Animating Performance

6th-level College of Creation feature

Your mastery over the Song of Creation allows you to magically bring items to life. As an action, you can target a Large or smaller nonmagical item you can see within 30 feet of you and animate it. The animate item uses the Dancing Item stat block and is under your control for 1 hour or until it is reduced to 0 hit points.

In combat, the item shares your initiative count, but it takes its turn immediately after yours. It can move and use its reaction on its own, but the only action it takes on its turn is the Dodge action, unless you take a bonus action on your turn to command it to take one of the actions in its stat block or the Dash, Disengage, Help, Hide, or Search action.

When you use your Bardic Inspiration feature, you can command which action your animated item takes as part of the same bonus action.

Once you animate an item with this feature, you can't do so again until you finish a long rest or until you expend a spell slot of 3rd level or higher to use this feature. You can have only one item animated by this feature at a time; if you use this action and already have a dancing item from this feature, the first one immediately becomes inanimate.

Dancing Item

Large or smaller construct, neutral

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points equal the dancing item's Constitution modifier + your Charisma modifier + five times your level in this class

Speed 40 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| 18 (+4) | 14 (+2) | 16 (+3) | 4 (−4) | 10 (+0) | 6 (−2) |

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, poisoned, frightened

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages understands the languages you speak

Endless Waltz. Immediately after the item makes a slam attack, it can take the Dodge action as a bonus action.

Immutable Form. The item is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

Actions (Requires Your Bonus Action)

Force-Empowered Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* your spell attack modifier to hit, reach 5 ft., one target you can see. *Hit:* 1d10 + your Charisma modifier force damage.

Performance of Creation

14th-level College of Creation feature

Your performance can manipulate the magic of creation, briefly transforming the world around you. As an action, you can create one nonmagical item of your choice in an unoccupied space within 10 feet of you. The item must appear on a surface or in a liquid that can support it. The gp value of the item can't be more than 20 times your bard level and must be Large or smaller. Tiny glimmering, intangible notes float around it, and a creature can faintly hear music when

touching it. For examples of items you can create, see the Armor, Weapons, Adventuring Gear, Tools, and Mounts and Vehicles tables in chapter 5, "Equipment," of the *Player's Handbook*.

The created item disappears at the end of your next turn, unless you use your action to maintain it. Each time you use your action in this way, the item's duration is extended to the end of your next turn, up to a maximum of 1 minute. If you maintain the item for the full minute, it continues to exist for a number of hours equal to your bard level.

Once you create an item with this feature, you can't do so again until you finish a long rest or until you expend a spell slot of 5th level or higher to use this feature. You can have only one item created by this feature at a time; if you use this action and already have an item from this feature, the first one immediately vanishes.

Cleric

At 1st level, a cleric gains the Divine Domain feature. Here is a playtest option for that feature: the Unity Domain.

Unity Domain

A sense of oneness shines at the heart of healthy communities, whether bound together by friendship, blood, faith, or some other uniting force. The gods of unity deepen such bonds and delight in their strength.

Clerics of these gods preside over marriages and other familial bonding customs, but they also nurture the emotional bonds of friendship and camaraderie. Their divine blessings bolster and protect allies in battle through these deep bonds and turn aside malign influences.

Unity Deities

| Deity | Pantheon |
|---------------------|------------------|
| Angharradh | Elven |
| Athena | Greek |
| Berronar Truesilver | Dwarven |
| Boldrei | Eberron |
| Cyrrollalee | Halfling |
| Eldath | Forgotten Realms |
| Gaerdal Ironhand | Gnomish |
| Heimdall | Norse |
| Paladine | Dragonlance |
| Rao | Greyhawk |

Domain Spells

1st-level Unity Domain feature

You gain domain spells at the cleric levels listed in the Unity Domain Spells table. See the Divine Domain class feature for how domain spells work.

Unity Domain Spells

| Cleric Level | Spells |
|--------------|--|
| 1st | <i>heroism, shield of faith</i> |
| 3rd | <i>aid, warding bond</i> |
| 5th | <i>beacon of hope, sending</i> |
| 7th | <i>aura of purity, guardian of faith</i> |
| 9th | <i>greater restoration, Rary's telepathic bond</i> |

Emboldening Bond

1st-level Unity Domain feature

You can forge an empowering bond between allies. As an action, you can choose two willing creatures you can see within 30 feet of you (this can include yourself) and create a magical bond between them. While either bonded creature is within 30 feet of the other, the creature can roll a d4 and add the number rolled to an attack roll, an ability check, or a saving throw it makes. Each creature can add the d4 no more than once per turn. The bond lasts for 1 hour or until you use this feature again.

You can use this feature once, and you regain the ability to do so when you finish a long rest. You can also expend a spell slot to use the feature again.

Channel Divinity: Shared Burden

2nd-level Unity Domain feature

You can use your Channel Divinity to protect your allies through the strength of your shared bonds.

When a creature you can see within 30 feet of you takes damage, you can use your reaction to choose a number of other willing creatures you can see, up to a number of creatures equal to your Wisdom modifier (minimum of one creature). Distribute the damage taken between the original target and the chosen creatures. Each creature must take at least 1 damage. Apply any damage resistance or vulnerability of the creatures involved after you distribute the damage.

Protective Bond

6th-level Unity Domain feature

The bond you forge between people shields them from harm. While either creature chosen for your Emboldening Bond feature is within 30 feet of the other, the creature can use its reaction to grant resistance to all damage to the other creature when that other creature takes damage. This resistance lasts until the end of the current turn.

Potent Spellcasting

8th-level Unity Domain feature

You add your Wisdom modifier to the damage you deal with any cleric cantrip.

Rule Tip: Divine Strike vs. Potent Spellcasting

The Divine Domains in the *Player's Handbook* each give a cleric one of two features at 8th level: either Divine Strike or Potent Spellcasting. If the clerics of a domain typically rely on weapon use, those clerics get Divine Strike. Other clerics get Potent Spellcasting.

Enduring Unity

17th-level Unity Domain feature

The bonds you create endure across vast distances. Creatures affected by your Emboldening Bond feature gain its benefits, as well as those of your Protective Bond feature, while they are on the same plane of existence as each other.

Additionally, when a creature chosen for your Emboldening Bond is reduced to 0 hit points, their bonded partner gains the following benefits for 1 minute, or until the creature regains at least 1 hit point:

- The creature has advantage on attack rolls, ability checks, and saving throws
- The creature gains resistance to all damage
- As an action, the creature can touch their bonded partner to expend and roll any number of Hit Dice. Their bonded partner regains a number of hit points equal to the total rolled.

Sorcerer

At 1st level, a sorcerer gains the Sorcerous Origin feature. Here is a playtest option for that feature: the Clockwork Soul.

Clockwork Soul

A plane of utmost order, Mechanus is a realm overseen by a godlike entity called Primus, whose actions are inscrutable and calculations, vast. You, or someone from your lineage, might have become entangled in one of the machinations of the leader of the modrons. Perhaps you were exposed to an artifact created by Primus, or your ancestor took part in the Great Modron March in some way.

The power of Mechanus can seem strange and alien to others, but for you it is part of a vast and glorious system that others can't comprehend. At your option, you can pick from or roll on the Manifestations of Mechanus table to create a way your connection to the plane manifests while you are casting a spell.

Manifestations of Mechanus

- | d6 | Manifestation |
|----|---|
| 1 | Large, spectral cogwheels appear hovering behind you. |
| 2 | The hands of a clock appear in your eyes. |
| 3 | Your skin glows with a golden, metallic sheen. |
| 4 | Your features become unnaturally angular, like geometric objects. |
| 5 | Your spellcasting focus takes the form of a miniature Spawning Stone or other creation of Primus. |
| 6 | The ringing of a clock can be heard by you and those affected by your magic. |

Clockwork Magic

1st-level Clockwork Soul feature

You learn additional spells when you reach certain levels in this class, as shown on the Clockwork Spells table. Each spell counts as a sorcerer spell for you, but it doesn't count against the number of sorcerer spells you know. These spells can't be replaced when you gain a level in this class.

Clockwork Spells

Sorcerer

| Level | Spells |
|-------|--|
| 1st | alarm, protection from evil and good |
| 3rd | find traps, heat metal |
| 5th | counterspell, glyph of warding |
| 7th | arcane eye, Otiluke's resilient sphere |
| 9th | animate objects, wall of force |

Restore Balance

1st-level Clockwork Soul feature

Your connection to the plane of absolute order allows you to equalize chaotic moments. When a creature you can see within 60 feet of you is about to roll a d20 with advantage or disadvantage, you can use your reaction to prevent the roll from being affected by advantage and disadvantage.

You can use this feature a number of times equal to your Charisma modifier (minimum of once), and you regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Bulwark of Law

6th-level Clockwork Soul feature

You can imbue a creature with a shimmering shield of order. As an action, you can expend 1 to 5 sorcery points to create a magical ward around yourself or another creature you can see within 30 feet of you. The ward lasts until you finish a long rest or until you use this feature again.

The ward is represented by a number of d8s equal to the number of sorcery points spent to create it. When the warded creature takes damage, it can use its reaction to spend a number of those dice, roll them, and reduce the damage taken by the total of the spent dice.

Trance of Order

14th-level Clockwork Soul feature

You gain the ability to enter a state of clockwork consciousness as a bonus action. For the next minute, attack rolls against you can't benefit from advantage, and whenever you make an attack roll, an ability check, or a saving throw, you can treat a d20 roll of 9 or lower as a 10.

Once you use this action, you can't use it again until you finish a long rest or until you expend 5 sorcery points to use it again.

Clockwork Cavalcade

18th-level Clockwork Soul feature

You summon spirits of order to restore balance around you. As an action, you summon the spirits in a 30-foot cube originating from you. The spirits look like modrons or other constructs of your choice. The spirits are intangible and invulnerable, work fast and efficiently, and create the following effects within the cube before vanishing:

- The spirits restore up to 100 hit points, divided as you choose among any number of creatures of your choice in the cube.
- Any damaged objects entirely in the cube are repaired.
- Every spell of 6th level or lower ends on creatures and objects of your choice in the cube.

Once you use this action, you can't use it again until you finish a long rest or until you expend 7 sorcery points to use it again.

UNEARTHED ARCANA 2020

Subclasses, Part 3

This document provides playtest options for the artificer, druid, and ranger.

This Is Playtest Material

The material in this article is presented for playtesting and to spark your imagination. These game mechanics are in draft form, usable in your campaign but not refined by full game design and editing. They aren't officially part of the game and aren't permitted in D&D Adventurers League events.

If we decide to make this material official, it will be refined based on your feedback, and then it will appear in a D&D book.

Artificer

At 3rd level, an artificer gains the Artificer Specialist feature. Here is a playtest option for that feature: the Armorer.

Armorer

An artificer who specializes as an Armorer modifies armor to function almost like a second skin. The armor is enhanced to hone the artificer's magic, unleash potent attacks, and generate a formidable defense. The artificer bonds with this armor, becoming one with it even as they experiment with it and refine its magical capabilities.

Tools of the Trade

3rd-level Armorer feature

You gain proficiency with heavy armor. You also gain proficiency with smith's tools. If you already have this tool proficiency, you gain proficiency with one other type of artisan's tools of your choice.

Armorer Spells

3rd-level Armorer feature

You always have certain spells prepared after you reach particular levels in this class, as shown in the Armorer Spells table. These spells count as artificer spells for you, but they don't count against the number of artificer spells you prepare.

Armorer Spells

| Artificer Level | Spell |
|-----------------|--|
| 3rd | <i>magic missile, shield</i> |
| 5th | <i>mirror image, shatter</i> |
| 9th | <i>hypnotic pattern, lightning bolt</i> |
| 13th | <i>fire shield, greater invisibility</i> |
| 17th | <i>passwall, wall of force</i> |

Design Note: Subclass Spells

Some subclasses add spells to a character's list of available spells. If the character is a member of a class, such as the cleric, that prepares spells, the additional spells are a mix of ones that the character should always have prepared (because of story or rules reasons) and ones adopted from another class (expanding the character's options beyond the class's normal limits).

If the character knows their spells, rather than preparing them, the spells are almost always adopted from another class.

Whether or not a class prepares or knows their spells, the spells on the list are selected (with rare exceptions) from the *Player's Handbook*, the only book a player is expected to have.

Power Armor

3rd-level Armorer feature

Your metallurgical pursuits have led to you making armor a conduit for your artificer magic. As an action, you can turn a suit of heavy armor you are wearing into power armor, provided you have smith's tools in hand.

You gain the following benefits while wearing the power armor:

- If the armor normally has a Strength requirement, the power armor lacks this requirement for you.
- You can use the power armor as a spellcasting focus for your artificer spells.
- The power armor attaches to you and can't be removed against your will. It also expands to cover your entire body, and it replaces any missing limbs, functioning identically to a body part it is replacing.

The armor continues to be power armor until you doff it, you don another suit of armor, or you die.

Armor Model

3rd-level Armorer feature

You can customize your power armor. When you do so, choose one of the following armor models: guardian or infiltrator. The model you choose gives you special benefits while you wear it.

Each model includes a special weapon. When you attack with that weapon, you can use your Intelligence modifier, instead of Strength or Dexterity, for the attack and damage rolls.

You can change your power armor's model whenever you finish a short or long rest, provided you have smith's tools in hand.

Guardian. You design your armor to be in the frontline of conflict. It has the following features:

Thunder Gauntlets. Your armored fists each count as a simple melee weapon, and each deals 1d8 thunder damage on a hit. A creature hit by the gauntlet has disadvantage on attack rolls against targets other than you until the start of your next turn, as the armor magically emits a distracting pulse when the creature attacks someone else.

Defensive Field. You gain a bonus action that you can use on each of your turns to gain temporary hit points equal to your level in this class, replacing any temporary hit points you already have. You lose these temporary hit points if you doff the armor.

Infiltrator. You customize your armor for subtle undertakings. It has the following features:

Lightning Launcher. A gemlike node appears on one of your armored fists or on the chest (your choice). It counts as a simple ranged weapon, with a normal range of 90 feet and a long range of 300 feet, and it deals 1d6 lightning damage on a hit. Once on each of your turns when you hit a creature with it, you can deal an extra 1d6 lightning damage to that target.

Powered Steps. Your walking speed increases by 5 feet.

Second Skin. The armor's weight is negligible, and it becomes formfitting and wearable under clothing. If the armor normally imposes disadvantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks, the power armor doesn't.

Rule Tip: Bonus Actions

If you gain the ability to take a bonus action, remember that you can take it only on your turn, and you can't take more than one bonus action on that turn. For more information, see the "Bonus Actions" section on page 189 of the *Player's Handbook*.

Extra Attack

5th-level Armorer feature

You can attack twice, rather than once, whenever you take the Attack action on your turn.

Armor Modifications

9th-level Armorer feature

You learn how to use your artificer infusions to specially modify the armor enhanced by your Power Armor feature. That armor now counts as separate items for the purposes of your Infuse Items feature: armor (the chest piece), boots, bracers, and a weapon. Each of those items can bear one of your infusions. In addition, the maximum number of items you can infuse at once increases by 2, but those extra items must be part of your power armor.

Perfected Armor

15th-level Armorer feature

Your power armor gains additional benefits based on its model, as shown below.

Guardian. Tinkering with your armor's energy system leads you to discover a powerful pulling force. When a creature you can see ends its turn within 30 feet of you, you can use your reaction to force the creature to succeed on a Strength saving throw against your spell save DC or be pulled up to 30 feet toward you to an unoccupied space. If you pull the target to space within 5 feet of you, you can make a melee weapon attack against it as part of this reaction.

You can use this reaction a number of times equal to your Intelligence modifier (minimum of once). You regain all expended uses of it when you finish a long rest.

Infiltrator. Any creature that takes lightning damage from your Lightning Launcher glimmers with light until the start of your next turn. The glimmering creature sheds dim light in a 5 foot radius, and the next attack roll against it by a creature other than you has advantage. If that attack hits, it deals an extra 1d6 lightning damage.

Artificer Infusions

When you choose your artificer infusions, you have access to the following options.

Armor of Magical Strength

Prerequisite: 10th-level artificer

Item: A suit of armor (requires attunement)

While wearing this armor, a creature can use its Intelligence modifier in place of its Strength modifier when making Strength checks and Strength saving throws.

The armor has 4 charges. As a reaction when it would be knocked prone, the wearer can expend 1 charge to not be knocked prone. The armor regains 1d4 expended charges daily at dawn.

Armor of Tools

Item: A suit of armor

As an action, a creature wearing this infused armor can integrate into it artisan's tools or thieves' tools. The tools remain integrated in the armor for 8 hours or until the wearer removes the tools as an action. The armor can have only one tool integrated at a time.

The wearer can add its Intelligence modifier to any ability checks it makes with the integrated tool. The wearer must have a hand free to use the tool.

Helm of Awareness

Prerequisite: 10th-level artificer

Item: A helmet (requires attunement)

While wearing this helmet, a creature has advantage on initiative rolls. In addition, the wearer can't be surprised, provided it isn't incapacitated.

Mind Sharpener

Item: A suit of armor or robes

The infused item can send a jolt to the wearer to refocus their mind. While wearing this infused item, whenever the creature fails a Constitution saving throw to maintain concentration on a spell, it can use its reaction to succeed instead.

Spell-Refueling Ring

Prerequisite: 6th-level artificer

Item: A ring (requires attunement)

While wearing this ring, the creature can recover one expended spell slot as an action. The maximum level of the recovered slot is equal to the number of magic items the wearer is currently attuned to. Once used, the ring can't be used again until the next dawn.

Druid

At 2nd level, a druid gains the Druid Circle feature. Here is a playtest option for that feature: the Circle of the Stars.

Circle of the Stars

An ancient lineage, the Circle of Stars allows druids to draw on the power of starlight. These druids have tracked heavenly patterns since time immemorial, discovering secrets hidden amid the constellations. By revealing and understanding these secrets, the Circle of the Stars seeks to harness the powers of the cosmos.

Many druids of this circle keep detailed records of the stars and their effects on the world. Some groups document these observations at megalithic sites, which serve as enigmatic libraries of lore. These repositories might take the form of stone circles, pyramids, petroglyphs, and underground temples—any construction durable enough to protect the circle's sacred knowledge even against a great cataclysm.

Star Map

2nd-level Circle of the Stars feature

You've created a star map as part of your study of the heavens. The map is a Tiny object and can serve as a spellcasting focus for your druid spells. You decide what form the object takes, or you can determine what it is by rolling on the Star Map table.

Star Map

| d6 | Map Form |
|----|--|
| 1 | A scroll of living wood that aligns with heavenly bodies |
| 2 | A stone tablet with fine holes drilled through it |
| 3 | A speckled owlbear hide, tooled with raised marks |
| 4 | A collection of maps bound in an ebony cover |

- 5 A crystal that projects starry patterns when placed before a light
- 6 Tempered glass disks that align to depict constellations

If you lose your map, you can perform a 1-hour ceremony to magically create a replacement. This ceremony can be performed during a short or long rest, and it destroys the previous map.

You can cast the *augury* and *guiding bolt* spells without expending a spell slot and without preparing the spell, provided you use the star map as the spellcasting focus. You can cast a spell from the map in this way a number of times equal to your Wisdom modifier (minimum of once), and you regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Starry Form

2nd-level Circle of the Stars feature

You gain the ability to harness constellations' power to alter your form. As an action, you can expend a use of your Wild Shape feature to take on a starry form rather than transforming into a beast.

While in your starry form, you retain your game statistics, but your body takes on a luminous, starlike quality; your joints glimmer like stars, and glowing lines connect them as on a star chart. This form sheds bright light in a 10-foot radius and dim light for an additional 10 feet. The form lasts for 10 minutes or until you're incapacitated.

Whenever you assume your starry form, choose which of the following constellations glimmers on your body; your choice gives you certain benefits while in the form:

Chalice. A constellation of a life-giving goblet appears on you. Whenever you cast a spell using a spell slot that restores hit points to a creature, you or another creature within 30 feet of you can regain hit points equal to 1d8 + half your level in this class.

Archer. A constellation of an archer appears on you. You gain a bonus action that you can use to make a ranged spell attack, hurling a luminous arrow that targets a creature you can see within 60 feet of you. On a hit, the attack deals radiant damage equal to 1d8 + your Wisdom modifier.

Dragon. A constellation of a wise, ancient dragon appears on you. When you make an Intelligence or a Wisdom check or a Constitution saving throw to maintain concentration on a spell, you can treat a roll of 9 or lower on the d20 as a 10.

Rule Tip: Round Down

Whenever you end up with a fraction in the game, round down, even if the fraction is one-half or greater, unless a rule explicitly tells you to round up.

Cosmic Omen

6th-level Circle of the Stars feature

You learn to use your star map to divine the will of the cosmos. Whenever you finish a long rest, you can consult your star map for omens. When you do so, roll a d6. You gain one of the following possible omens based on whether you rolled an even number or an odd number on the d6:

Weal (even). Whenever a creature you can see within 30 feet of you makes an attack roll, a saving throw, or an ability check, you can use your reaction to roll a d6 and add the number rolled to the total.

Woe (odd). Whenever a creature you can see within 30 feet of you makes an attack roll, a saving throw, or an ability check, you can use your reaction to roll a d6 and subtract the number rolled from the total.

You can use this reaction a number of times equal to your Wisdom modifier, and you regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Full of Stars

10th-level Circle of the Stars feature

While your Starry Form feature is active, you become partially incorporeal, giving you resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage.

Rule Tip: Resistance

When you have resistance to a damage type, that damage is halved against you. Here's the order that you apply modifiers to a type of damage: (1) any relevant damage immunity, (2) any addition or subtraction to the damage, (3) a relevant damage resistance, and then (4) a relevant damage vulnerability.

Star Flare

14th-level Circle of the Stars feature

Your connection to the cosmos allows you to conjure brilliant starlight. As an action, you conjure a burst of light in a 30-foot-radius sphere centered on a point you can see within 120 feet of you. You can immediately teleport each willing creature in the sphere to an unoccupied space within 30 feet of it. Each creature remaining in the sphere must succeed on a Constitution saving throw against your spell save DC or take 4d10 radiant damage and be blinded until the end of your next turn.

Once you have used this action, you can't use it again until you finish a long rest or until you expend a spell slot of 5th level or higher to use it again.

Ranger

At 3rd level, a ranger gains the Ranger Archetype feature. Here is a playtest option for that feature: the Fey Wanderer.

Fey Wanderer

As a Fey Wanderer, you guard the border between the Feywild and the Material Plane, guiding the lost out of the Feywild and preventing dangerous fey from damaging the Material Plane. Your experience with both domains makes you an exceptional negotiator between inhabitants of these worlds, as you understand both humanoid mindsets and the wiles of the fey courts.

Fey Wanderers possess a preternatural blessing from a fey ally or a place of fey power. Choose your blessing from the Feywild Gifts table or determine it randomly.

Feywild Gifts

d6 Gift

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | Illusory butterflies flutter around you while you take a short or long rest. |
| 2 | Fresh, seasonal flowers sprout from your hair each dawn. |
| 3 | You faintly smell of cinnamon, lavender, nutmeg, or another comforting herb or spice. |
| 4 | Your shadow dances while no one is looking directly at it. |
| 5 | Delicate horns or antlers sprout from your head. |
| 6 | Your skin and hair change color to match the season at each dawn. |

Fey Wanderer Magic

3rd-level Fey Wanderer feature

You learn an additional spell when you reach certain levels in this class, as shown in the Fey Wanderer Spells table. The spell counts as a ranger spell for you, but it doesn't count against the number of ranger spells you know.

Fey Wanderer Spells

| Ranger Level | Spell |
|--------------|---------------------|
| 3rd | <i>charm person</i> |
| 5th | <i>misty step</i> |
| 9th | <i>dispel magic</i> |
| 13th | <i>banishment</i> |
| 17th | <i>mislead</i> |

Cunning Will

3rd-level Fey Wanderer feature

Your experience with the fey has guarded your mind and sharpened your tongue. You have advantage on saving throws against being charmed or frightened.

In addition, you gain proficiency in one of the following skills of your choice: Deception, Performance, or Persuasion.

Dreadful Strikes

3rd-level Fey Wanderer feature

You augment your attacks with mind-scarring magic, drawn from the gloomy hollows of the unseelie fey. You gain a bonus action that you can use to imbue the weapon, or weapons, you're currently holding with magic. Until the end of the turn, the weapons are magical, and they deal an extra 1d6 psychic damage on a hit. A creature can take this extra damage only once per turn.

When you engage in two-weapon fighting, you can imbue your weapons as part of the same bonus action you use to make the attack.

Blessings of the Courts

7th-level Fey Wanderer feature

You have learned eerie techniques from both the Gloaming Court and the Summer Court of the Feywild. Once during each of your turns, when you hit a creature with a weapon attack, you can expend a spell slot to deal extra psychic damage. The extra damage is 3d6 psychic damage and the creature must succeed on a Wisdom saving

throw against your spell save DC or be frightened of you until the end of your next turn.

In addition, whenever you make a Charisma check, you gain a bonus to the check equal to your Wisdom modifier.

Beguiling Twist

11th-level Fey Wanderer feature

You learn how to manipulate mind-altering magic, channeling it from your allies toward others. Whenever a creature you can see within 120 feet of you succeeds on a saving throw against being charmed or frightened, you can use your reaction to force a different creature you can see within 120 feet of you to succeed on a Wisdom saving throw against your spell save DC or suffer your choice of one of the following effects:

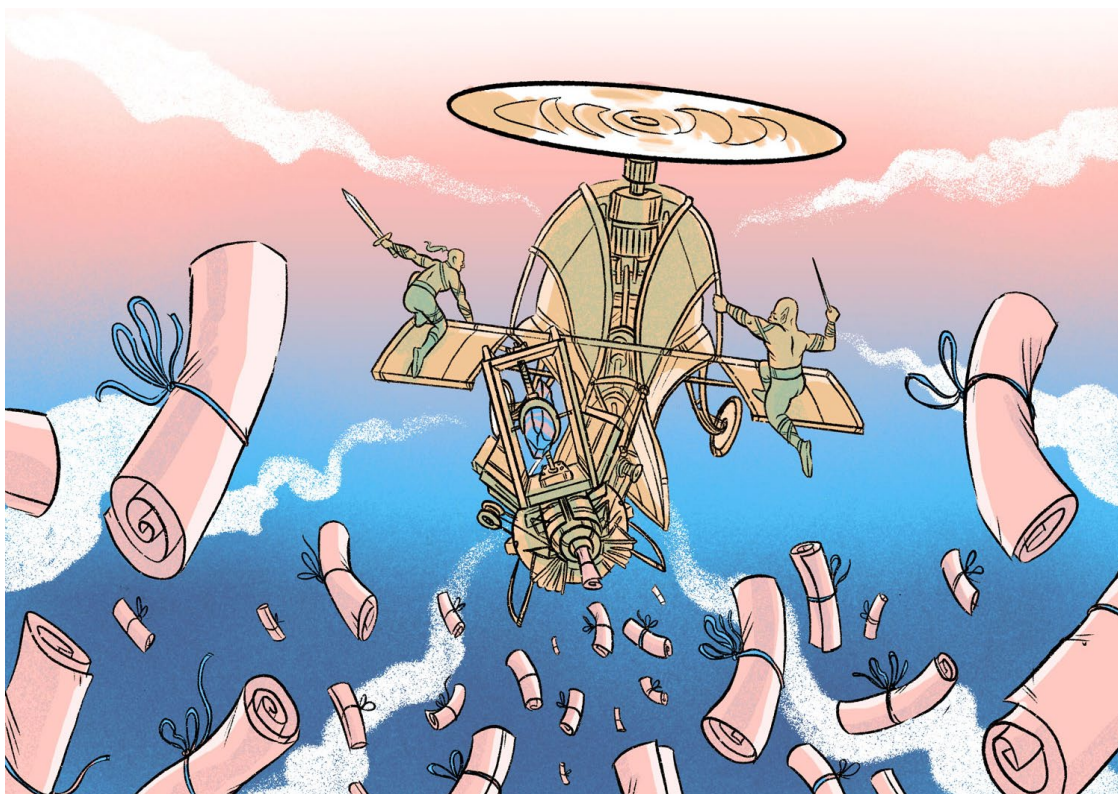
- The creature is charmed or frightened by you (your choice) for 1 minute. The creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a successful save.
- The creature takes 3d10 psychic damage.

Misty Presence

15th-level Fey Wanderer feature

You can magically remove yourself from one creature's perception: you gain a bonus action that you can use to force a creature you can see within 30 feet of you to make a Wisdom saving throw against your spell save DC. On a failed save, the target can't see or hear you for 24 hours. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of any turn during which you hit it with an attack roll, forced it to make a saving throw, or dealt damage to it. The effect ends early if you use this bonus action again. On a successful save, the target is immune to this feature for 7 days.

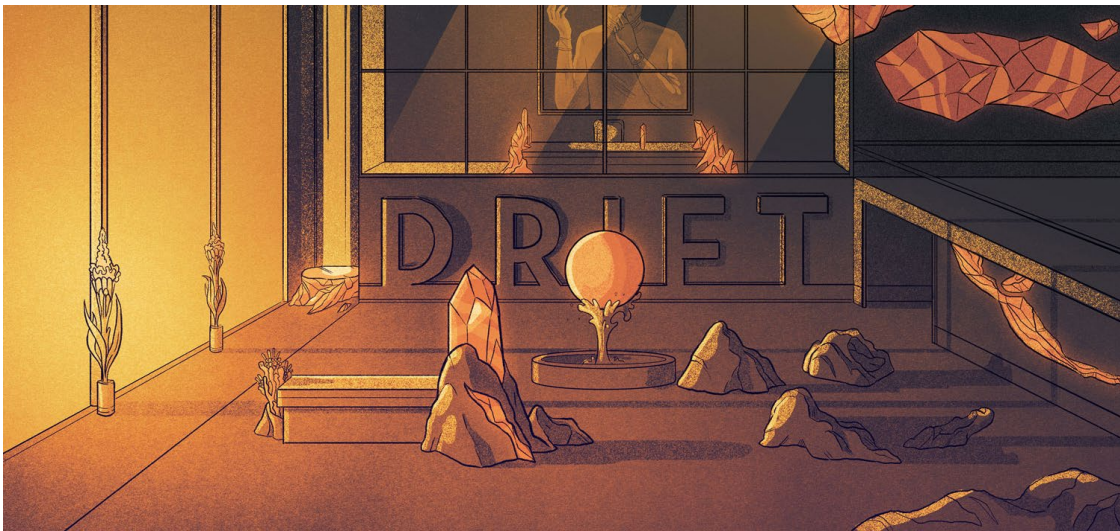
Once you've used this bonus action, you can't use it again until you finish a long rest or until you expend a spell slot of 4th level or higher to use it again.



The Gribbits Detective Agency II

DM David Harmon brings the *Dragon Friends* podcast to your tabletop for a second outing

Back in *Dragon+* #18 the *Dragon Friends* allowed us all to step into their madcap world courtesy of a playable scenario. *The Gribbits Detective Agency* took place between seasons one and two of the *Dragon Friends* podcast—following events at the House of the Artificer but before the party’s trip to Barovia.



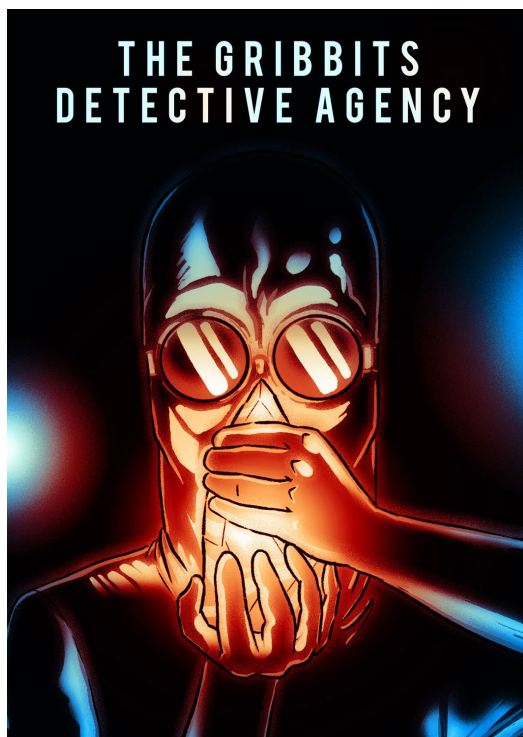
The scenario (which saw the team hunting through urban chaos for Janos Meer, a powerful underworld figure known as the Beggar King) set the record straight about what exactly happened between those two seasons, while also adding a few Easter eggs that built on the backstories of NPCs and factions in the podcast.

“That’s a lot of words to say that we basically used that adventure to plug all our idiot plot holes,” says its co-writer Ben Jenkins.

The Gribbits Detective Agency II is an adventure for four level 2 characters and is designed to follow on from **the original adventure**. Mykon Drift, genius inventor and entrepreneur, has disappeared ahead of his greatest ever product launch. Drift is a disruptor in the truest sense and the techno marvels he releases often wreak havoc on the guilds and economies of the Sword Coast. But titans of industry like him do not just disappear and someone is willing to pay to find him. Unfortunately, they’re not willing to pay very well, so what they get is the Gribbits Detective Agency.



“Both Gribbits and Janos Meer are regular recurring characters in the



Dragon Friends universe,” says Dungeon Master David Harmon. “This second scenario allows us to build out the world of the Gribbits Detective Agency a little more and to de-tether it from the *Dragon Friends* main plot, while still working as a companion piece. By moving the action to Baldur’s Gate we also set up a possible third outing that ties into current *Dragon Friends* storylines.”

Simon Greiner is on hand once more to provide original art for

The Gribbits Detective Agency II, while **Jog Brogzin** has designed an incredible spiralling dungeon map.

DOWNLOAD GRIBBITS DETECTIVE AGENCY II

The *Dragon Friends* podcast is available at **the group’s official website**, on **Spotify** and on **iTunes**. Click **this link** to download the first Gribbits scenario, including 1st-level character sheets for Bobby, Philge and Freezo.

BACK TO TOP

A DRAGON FRIENDS ADVENTURE
FOR 2ND-LEVEL CHARACTERS

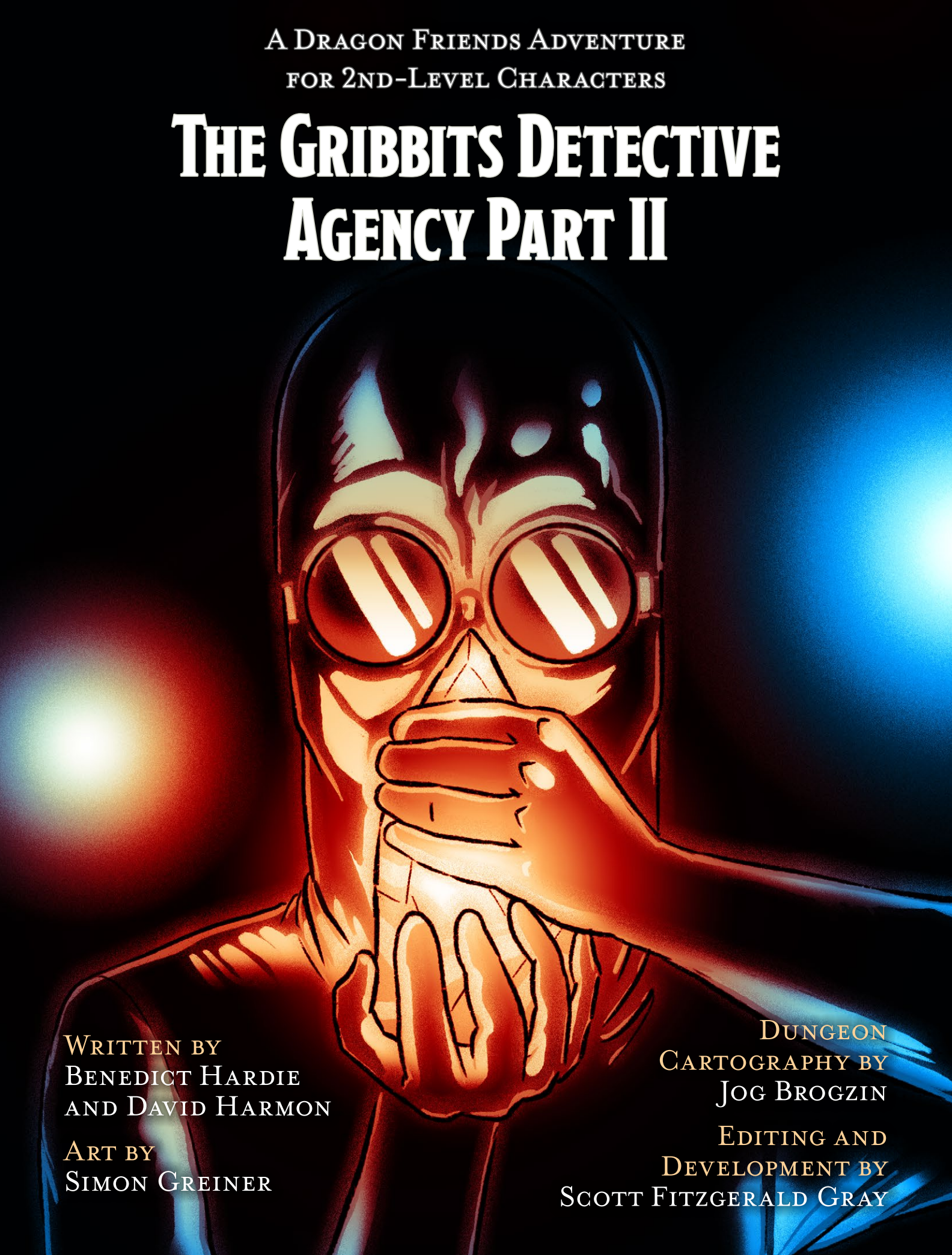
THE GRIBBITS DETECTIVE AGENCY PART II

WRITTEN BY
BENEDICT HARDIE
AND DAVID HARMON

ART BY
SIMON GREINER

DUNGEON
CARTOGRAPHY BY
JOG BROGZIN

EDITING AND
DEVELOPMENT BY
SCOTT FITZGERALD GRAY



Mykon Drift, genius inventor and entrepreneur, has disappeared on the eve of his greatest ever product launch, and nobody seems to know why or where he's gone. Certain jaded onlookers might think this is for the best, for Drift is a disrupter in the truest sense, and the technomantic marvels he creates often wreak havoc on the guilds and economies of the Sword Coast.

But titans of industry like Mykon Drift don't just disappear for no reason, and his most loyal apprentice is willing to pay to find him. Unfortunately, that apprentice isn't willing to pay very well, so what they get is the Gribbits Detective Agency.

The Gribbits Detective Agency Part II is a DUNGEONS & DRAGONS adventure for four 2nd-level characters. It is designed to follow on from [The Gribbits Detective Agency](#), and should be played in a single sitting.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The adventure begins with the party, all members of the badly funded Gribbits Detective Agency, learning of the disappearance of the inventor Mykon Drift. The visionary creator of the *driftglobe* and other technomantic marvels, Drift currently bases his operations in Waterdeep, and is rumored to have been working on a new magic item—possibly his greatest yet.

That secret invention is the *autoscript*—a printing press built with a focus crystal capable of instantly translating thaumaturgical impulse (spells) into a dormant written form (scrolls). More than just a convenience, though, the *autoscript* would irrevocably unhinge the social order of the Western Heartlands, allowing the rarest and most powerful magical spells to be easily copied and replicated on an industrial scale by just about any old riffraff. Even better (which is to say, worse), unlike with traditional *spell scrolls*, an *autoscript spell scroll* can be used by anyone who can read Common—even characters with no spellcasting ability.

Realizing this, certain members of the Lords' Alliance made the difficult decision to abduct Drift and conscript him into their service to prevent the *autoscript* from falling into the wrong hands. Sympathetic double agents have been tasked with breaking up the Drift Consortium, while the inventor is to be held in a black site laboratory, creating technology purely for the benefit of the existing lords of the land. Mykon Drift has other ideas, however, and is planning his escape from the facility—if he can just get a little bit of help.

LOCATIONS

The Gribbits Detective Agency Part II follows on from—bear with us—*The Gribbits Detective Agency*, and is set within the timeline of the *Dragon Friends* podcast. As such, it takes place in and near the Dragon Friends' own peculiar version of Waterdeep—a harborside city that continues to thrive despite the misguided attention of a certain adventuring party. Interested Dungeon Masters can immerse themselves in this expanded universe at www.thedragonfriends.com or anywhere good podcasts are downloaded.

This adventure unfolds in three parts:

- **Act 1: A Corporate Affair** sees the adventurers visiting the stylish offices of the Drift Consortium, one of the fastest-growing mercantile operations in the city of Waterdeep. While at DriftCo, they investigate Mykon Drift's disappearance, interview key suspects, and hopefully escape without setting off too many alarms.
- **Act 2: The Black Site** sees the party leave Waterdeep to investigate a secret compound used by the Lords' Alliance to hold items and persons too dangerous to be allowed to enter general circulation. This black site is located deep underground beneath a lookout point a half day from the city. However, as the characters ruthlessly explore the site intent on rescuing Drift, they discover the inventor about to escape on his own. Infuriating.
- **Act 3: Sky High** takes place high above the Western Heartlands, as Mykon Drift escapes from the black site on his *autoscript* invention. Which has been jury-rigged to fly as a gyrocopter. And he has the characters in tow. This inaugural flight becomes a showdown between the characters and agents of the Lords' Alliance, who use the *autoscript's* scroll-generating properties to produce an insane amount of magic at an incredibly unsafe altitude.

KEY CHARACTERS

The following NPCs are central to the adventure.

Gribbits. All truly great detective agencies are headed by a cunning, inscrutable, and tough-as-nails veteran of the investigative arts. Our heroes do not work for such an agency, however, so what they get is Gribbits. A goblin lawyer turned middle manager, Gribbits serves in the Waterdeep underground finding work for an agency of low-level adventurers and informants. He is cowardly and pessimistic, and has a tendency to fall to bits at the slightest sign of bullying.

Mykon Drift. Few people have done as much to change the day-to-day lives of Waterdavians in as short a time as the human mage and inventor Mykon Drift. Aloof, impersonal, and unquestionably brilliant, Drift has a gift for invention that has seen the city flooded with life-changing and affordable magical trinkets. Even better (at least for him), this gift has so far kept enough money flowing in to keep Drift's many rivals in the city guilds at bay.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

The following calendar highlights key backstory events and the timeline of the adventure.

3 Months Ago. Mykon Drift announces a date for his next product launch, and is secretly kidnapped by the Lords' Alliance.

2 Months Ago. Rowena Hollows is appointed vice president of the Drift Consortium and begins to quietly prep the company for dissolution.

1 Day Ago. Artie Stummer discovers Drift's disappearance and reports it to Hollows, who informs her masters.

Today. The Gribbits Detective Agency is engaged to find Mykon Drift, and Drift plans to make his escape.

Tomorrow. DriftCo is set to unveil the *autoscript* at the company's offices. The fate of the company hangs on a successful launch—which means the company will collapse if the *autoscript* and Mykon Drift fail to appear.

Rowena Hollows. The high-achieving half-elf vice president of DriftCo, Rowena is a relatively new hire. She's more of a lawyer and efficiency expert than a creative type, and has personally been responsible for managing the imminent product launch for Mykon Drift's newest invention. In truth, Rowena is a spy embedded in the Drift Consortium by the Lords' Alliance, and has been charged with putting an end to the disruptive start-up once and for all. Having ensured that the imprisoned Drift has no means to attend his own product launch and that the company has no prototype to unveil, Rowena is setting the launch up to be a public relations disaster of epic proportions. She believes this will both destroy DriftCo's reputation and help her prep the company for a speedy and inexpensive guild acquisition.

Arthur "Artie" Stummer. Artie Stummer is Mykon Drift's longtime personal apprentice. Nervous and fastidious by nature, he is both utterly impolitic and incapable of ambition. As such, he's a natural assistant, and has worked with Drift since magic academy, where they met in Artie's first and Drift's final year.

Molvano. An experienced operative of the Lords' Alliance, Molvano is the intendant and overseer of the Swallow's Head black site, where Mykon Drift has been secretly incarcerated. A forward-thinking administrator, Molvano quickly recognized that Drift would be far more valuable as an ally (unwitting or otherwise) than as a prisoner, and has set the genius inventor up in his own laboratory beneath Swallow's Head.

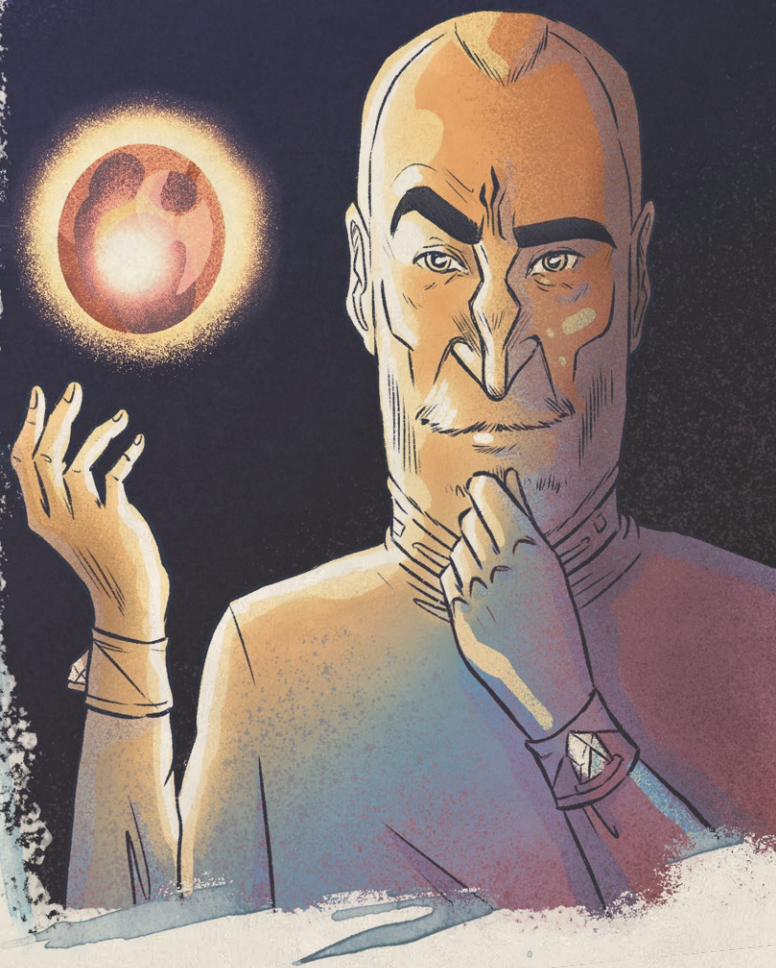
ACT 1: A CORPORATE AFFAIR

When you're ready to begin the adventure, read the following:

Far below the city of Waterdeep, in the subterranean markets of the Beggar Court, sits the squalid and poorly ventilated offices of the Gribbits Detective Agency. It is here that you have worked for some time as private investigators, undertaking missions too disreputable—or too insignificant—to trouble the powers-that-be in the city above.

The job isn't glamorous. It's not noble. It's not even very well paid. The offices are managed—very badly—by Gribbits the goblin, who has proven utterly incapable of providing you with regular work. So it's something of a surprise to check in this morning and discover a nervous-looking man in an apprentice's smock waiting with Gribbits in his office, a small sheath of papers gripped in his sweaty palms.

"Here come our mighty heroes now, Mr. Stummer!" says Gribbits, alternating between beaming at everyone present and flashing you furious glances when he thinks his guest can't see. "No doubt held back by some of our very important and of course top-secret work for the city. Now, Mr. Stummer. Tell my agents what you told me."



Gribbits (a chaotic good **goblin**) has been listening to Artie's story and hoping that any of the agency's operatives opportunistically stumble in through the door. Artie Stummer (a lawful good human **commoner**) is something of a nervous wreck, having been up all night with no one to turn to. He explains the following to the party, making copious reference to the notes he's brought along:

- Artie works for the Drift Consortium, Mykon Drift's one-of-a-kind arcane workshop and manufacturer of all manner of simple magic items sold across the Sword Coast.
- Despite being Drift's longtime personal assistant, Artie has seemingly been sidelined recently, forced to work on minor projects away from the genius inventor for the last three months. This is clearly a snub, as the company is gearing up for a major product launch tomorrow.

MONSTERS AND MAGIC

All the monster and NPC stat blocks in this adventure can be found in the *Monster Manual* or the adventure appendix. When a creature or NPC name appears in **bold** type, that's a visual cue for you to look up the stat block in the *Monster Manual*, unless the text instead refers you to the appendix.

The names of spells and magic items appear in *italics*. Unless the text refers you to the adventure appendix, spells can be found in the *Player's Handbook* and magic items can be found in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

- Artie has become increasingly concerned that something has happened to his mentor. Recent weekly all-staff meetings have been chaired by DriftCo vice president Rowena Hollows, and Drift has not been seen around the DriftCo technical campus in weeks.
- Mykon Drift's private offices have been locked down, with a company guard posted at the doors, since the launch was announced. Everyone can see Drift working late into the night through the frosted glass walls of the office, but he never comes out.
- Drift is known to go to ground during crunch times, so this behavior isn't completely out of the ordinary. But last night, Artie saw something that has made him fear for his boss's safety.

THE MISSING INVENTOR

The previous night, Artie was working late on his own projects when he saw a figure wearing Drift's iconic greatcoat heading down a corridor away from his private wing. Hoping to confront Drift and discover the reason for his own sidelining, Artie called out and ran to intercept him, grabbing at Drift's arm. As he did, he felt whirring mechanisms under the coat sleeve as the figure half turned in the low light, revealing a face that looked like a brass mask modeled after Drift's features. The figure barked at Stummer with what sounded like a pipe organ chord, and he fell back, alarmed. This allowed the figure to slip through a side door and back into Drift's private wing.

Artie is convinced that Drift has been kidnapped—or worse. He has filed a report of what he saw with the company's security force, but the guards seemed dismissive, suggesting that the apprentice might simply have been confused owing to too many late nights on the job. Fearing a conspiracy, Artie snuck out during his lunch break to the Beggar Court, having seen an ad for the detective agency on the wall of a nearby takeaway shop—a deal Gribbits has recently negotiated, and a fact that delights him.

Artie offers to pay the characters 150 gp each out of his personal expense account for proof of Drift's whereabouts, plus a further 250 gp as a group bonus if Drift is returned alive. He does not have the money on him and cannot offer an advance. He suggests they come by the DriftCo offices later that morning.

Artie is happy to answer any other questions the characters might have about Mykon Drift, DriftCo, or the company offices. If asked whether he suspects anyone else of being involved, he mentions that Hollows has been acting strangely, as have many of the DriftCo security guards. He also points out that Drift has many rivals—particularly the guilds of Waterdeep who resent his operation's lack of affiliation.

Artie claims to be unable to discuss the product launch, as he's been out of the loop on that project for months. He's happy to explain that it's a major event, and that Drift has promised in interviews that his new invention will revolutionize how people use magic forever. However, a successful DC 15 Charisma (Intimidation or Persuasion) check or suitable roleplaying gets a little more out of him. Artie recalls that when he last worked with Drift, the genius inventor had been studying the

metamagical capacity of certain precious gemstones used in *rings of spell storing*. He also recalls the codename of the secret project: SCRIBE.

When the characters have learned all they can, Artie insists that he needs to get back before he's missed and his absence raises suspicions. Once Artie has left, Gribbits does his best to convince the party to take the case. He reminds them that DriftCo is one of the most wealthy independent outfits in Waterdeep, and even beyond Stummer's payment, it's likely that Drift will reward them handsomely, allowing the agency to buy exciting things for the office like pens or a new front desk.

When the characters are ready to start their investigation, continue with the next section.

ARRIVAL AT DRIFTCo

The Drift Consortium is almost impossible to miss as the characters head into Castle Ward. Consisting of four buildings and a tiny park, the gleaming technical campus sits just off the Street of Bells in the shadow of the Tower of the Order—home to Waterdeep's venerable Watchful Order of Magists and Protectors.

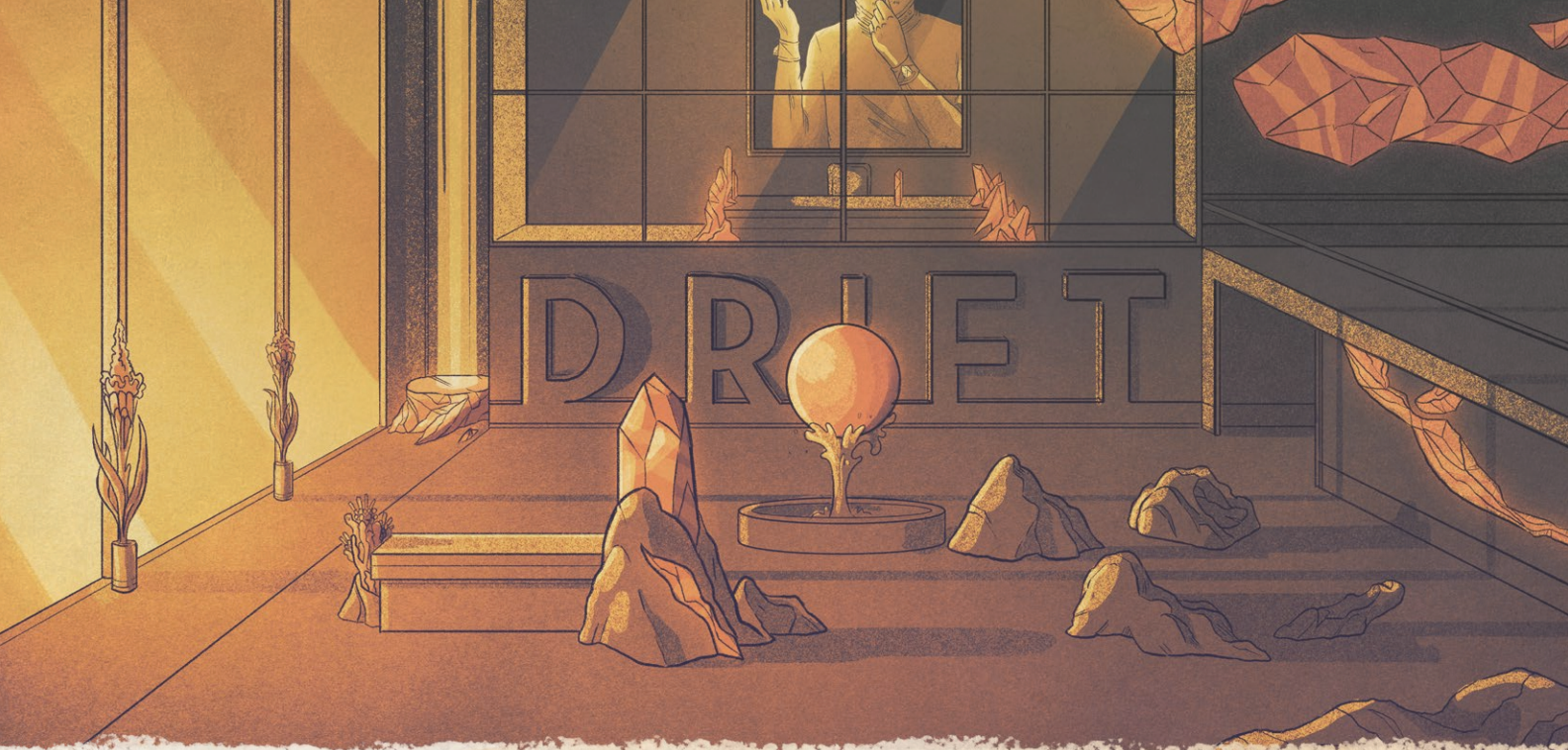
As the characters enter the lobby of the main building, read:

The marble-and-glass public lobby of Drift Consortium's flagship office was designed to be a direct challenge to the veiled and cloistered mysteries of Waterdeep's traditional magical colleges—and it shows. Everywhere you look, you see open-plan space. A gorgeous split-level mezzanine rises above you, covered in immaculately tended plants and offices. A giant central water-feature fountain is dominated by a massive floating *driftglobe* and a portrait of the company's founder, Mykon Drift.

Above and around you, scribes, mages, and seers zip around on what appear to be small and silent technomantic scooters, a variety of colorful lanyards around their necks. Small teams are erecting banners and other decorations ahead of tomorrow's launch event, overseen by a quick-moving gnome in a tidy white shirt. Amid all the bustle of employees and contractors, it's easy to slip inside.

Notionally, the ground floor of the main DriftCo building is open to the public, though guards and lobby assistants expect any visitors to have a good reason for being there. The space is dominated by a flagship DriftCo store, where common and uncommon magic items are available for purchase at whatever cost is appropriate for your campaign (and where *driftglobes* are available at a 10 percent discount). The lobby also features a small cafe, bathrooms, and an improbable number of beanbag chairs and ping-pong tables.

A fortified security office stands to the north of the lobby (see "Security!" below for more information), and a small employee services stand allows DriftCo employees to borrow the technomantic scooters mentioned above to zip around the campus. Any character with a magical



background or who succeeds on a DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana) check recognizes that the scooters are powered by an ingenious reconfiguration of the *Tenser's floating disk* spell.

The private open-plan office space above the lobby is kept more secure, and requires access via a set of stairwells guarded by members of the consortium's security guards. See "Security!" on page 7 for their statistics.

GNOME IN CHARGE

The lobby is minded by a genial receptionist named Phafflebee (a lawful good gnome **commoner**). Having been put in charge of decorations ahead of delivery of the new product, he's incredibly excited about it—and is willing to tell just about anybody how it's all going to look. The product itself hasn't been delivered yet—though a small circular stage and a folded velvet sheet suggests it's expected to be the size of a large cart.

Phafflebee is distracted enough by the celebrations to be easily manipulated. A successful DC 12 Charisma (Deception) check or suitable roleplaying convinces him to part with a set of contractor or press lanyards to allow access to the secure floors above.

If the characters decide to announce themselves formally as members of a detective agency, Phafflebee turns a sickly color and decides this is above his pay grade. He quickly summons a guard to take the characters to security chief Laella Banknote, "to discuss any concerns you might have." (For more on Banknote, see "Boardroom" on page 6 and "Security!" on page 7.)

SECOND FLOOR

Once the characters find a way upstairs, they can progress into the heart of the building.

ARTIE STUMMER'S OFFICE

If the characters try to visit Artie in his second-floor office, the place is empty and his desk is a mess of papers, tools, and partially deconstructed *driftglobes*. A

successful DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check made while searching the desk reveals a memo instructing Artie to head to an impromptu evaluation that very afternoon with Rowena Hollows in the boardroom.

If the characters spend too long at Artie's desk, a **goblin** janitor named Spiddle comes by to do a quick afternoon clean, and is curious to know what they're doing there. Spiddle is a frustrated amateur inventor. If he mistakes the characters for executives, he immediately pitches them his plans for a *slop bucket of devouring*. ("It's self cleaning!")

ROWENA HOLLOW'S OFFICE

The vice president's office is attended by her private secretary, a neutral elf **commoner** called Demeter Sook, who is very good at his job and utterly loathed by every other employee on the floor. Demeter idolizes Rowena, believing that she is everything the company needs to attain true success. Between him and anybody unfortunate enough to be stuck in a conversation with him, Sook is quick to opine that a consortium like this one needs a CEO with business and guild experience, not a dreamer like Mykon Drift.

Sook can take a message for "Miss Hollows," but informs the characters that she's engaged in a private meeting in the boardroom ahead of tomorrow's launch. He does his best to politely block the characters from entering the office, and calls security if needed.

If the characters manage to get into Rowena's office, they stand to discover quite a lot. Her neat desk contains a ledger detailing DriftCo's assets. A successful DC 14 Intelligence check made to scan it reveals that much of the ledger is arguably undervalued—almost like she's setting up the company for easy acquisition.

Rowena's private safe is locked, but can be opened with a successful DC 14 Dexterity check using thieves' tools. It is also protected by a built-in magical alarm effect attuned to Rowena. With a successful DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check, a character notes a faint magical glow

around the safe's door seal. If the safe is opened, Rowena is alerted. She excuses herself from her current business and heads quickly to her office, picking up an escort of two security guards en route.

Treasure. The safe contains a key to Drift's private office, 32 gp, two vials (one empty; one containing a dose of essence of ether poison), a *spell scroll* of *modify memory*, and a letter from someone named Molvano:

Rowena,

I have taken possession of the prototype, and my new guest, at our facility at Swallow's Head. You and your man have exceeded expectations. All that is left now is to keep the trail dark and anticipation high until the product launch.

In the aftermath of such a huge public debacle—with no founder's appearance and no prototype unveiling—DriftCo will never recover. In a month or two, a quick angel acquisition can put one of the more civic-minded guilds back in control of Drift's rogue inventory, as it always should have been.

Have no doubt that your work here has played a major part in upholding the peace—not just in Waterdeep but across the Sword Coast.

Molvano.

Any character who has spent significant time around Waterdeep, or who succeeds on a DC 12 Intelligence (History) check, knows that Swallow's Head is an old overgrown lookout point along the coast north of the city. The name 'Molvano' doesn't ring any bells, but the characters will learn more in act 2 of the adventure.

THIRD FLOOR

Characters who continue on upward (with or without security on their tail) eventually reach the third floor.

DRIFT'S OFFICES

Mykon Drift's private offices on the third floor face the staircase leading up to it, but their front wall and door are made of frosted glass. Through the glass, anyone coming up the stairs can make out a faint figure moving around the spacious office, and working on what appears to be a device the size of a large cart.

The door is protected around the clock by a single security guard, who is under instructions to let nobody enter. Such is the risk of corporate espionage or sabotage this close to the launch. The dwarf **thug** has suffered a recent malfunction with his wrist-mounted magical *messaging stone* (see "Security!" below) but has not yet had a chance to get it replaced. With the guard out of the way, the locked door can be opened with a successful DC 10 Dexterity check using thieves' tools, or with the keys found in Rowena Hollows's office or taken from Banknote.

THE IMPOSTOR INVENTOR

The figure behind the frosted glass is actually a specially crafted technomantic construct (use the **animated armor** stat block), obtained by Hollows to play the part of Drift. Every couple of days, the construct sneaks out to have its programming adjusted by Hollows or Sook. The 'prototype' it works on is one of Drift's workstations, upturned with a sheet over it to give the impression of bulk.

If the characters manage to access the office, the construct is working in Drift's cloak with its back to them. Though it cannot speak, it tries to maintain its disguise for as long as possible before attacking. Any character with a passive Wisdom (Perception) score of 15 or higher hears a faint ticking that grows louder as they approach 'Drift.'

Once the construct has been destroyed or incapacitated, any character who examines it discovers a five-pointed symbol engraved at the base of its neck. This can be recognized as a sign of the Lords' Alliance by any character who succeeds on a DC 10 Intelligence (History) check or who has the noble or sage background. Beneath the mark in a tidy printed script are the words: "MADE & MANUFACTURED AT SWALLOW'S HEAD." Any character who has spent significant time around Waterdeep, or who succeeds on a DC 12 Intelligence (History) check, knows that Swallow's Head is an old overgrown lookout point along the coast north of the city.

On the back of one of the creature's hands is a small maker's mark resembling the letters "MV." Someone has scratched "GRG" underneath it, possibly with a nail. (See part two of the adventure for more information on those responsible, Molvano and Greg.)

Characters who make a thorough investigation of the office discover signs of a struggle, with a shattered tea set swept under another desk. (Drift was drugged by Hollows before being bundled by her and Demeter Sook out of the building in a trunk.)

BOARDROOM

The third-floor boardroom is of an elegant modern fishbowl design, making it easy to see Artie Stummer being interviewed by VP Hollows (a lawful evil half-elf **spy**) and security chief Banknote (a lawful neutral female human **bandit captain**) at a vast table. With a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check, a character can see that Artie appears a little agitated, though his back is to the window.

If the characters linger outside the boardroom and aren't somehow hidden from view, Banknote walks up to the window and shuts the blinds. A moment later, she emerges to ask what they're doing there, then calls a guard to come and escort the party out of the building. (See "Security!" below for more information on Banknote.)

If the characters bluster or force their way in to see Rowena, the field operative deflects all questions and feigns ignorance if any talk is raised of Mykon Drift being missing. She is more than capable of protecting herself, and she carries a *veteran's cane* (see the appendix) that turns into a shortsword rather than a longsword.

Who Are You, Again? If the characters avoid attracting Banknote's attention, they see Artie Stummer emerge from the boardroom a short while later. He has been

interrogated by Hollows, who has cast *modify memory* on him to remove all recollection of his encounter with the construct. As a byproduct of this, Artie can make no sense of his memory of the meeting at the Gribbits Detective Agency. If the characters talk to him, either as he leaves the boardroom or back in his office, they find him agitated and confused, and acting as though meeting with the characters was some sort of sinister dream. If they press Artie, he panics and calls security.

SECURITY!

If the characters overstay their welcome at the DriftCo office one way or another, they are likely to attract the attention of security chief Laella Banknote and her guards. Banknote is an aristocratic-looking lawful neutral female human **bandit captain** whose hair hangs in a shining golden braid, and whose *wand of magic missiles* is hidden inside her sleeve.

At any given time, a force of ten guards patrols the five buildings of the DriftCo campus. These guards are recognizable by their no-nonsense haircuts, sharp slim-line robes, and dark, anonymizing eyewear. They use the **thug** stat block but carry hand crossbows instead of heavy crossbows:

Hand Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, range 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d6) piercing damage.

The guards maintain constant communication with each other thanks to an ingenious set of wrist-mounted *messaging stones*. Each stone is a rare magic item that allows its bearer to cast the *message* cantrip at will. If used to communicate with another creature also bearing a *messaging stone*, the stone has a range of 1,000 feet, allowing the guards to communicate with each other and with the central security office from any area of the campus.

Given the imminent launch of DriftCo's secret new product, Banknote is keen to deal with any interlopers discreetly—meaning she wants to avoid City Watch oversight or interference. However, she won't hesitate to call for backup if real violence breaks out.

WHAT BANKNOTE KNOWS

Banknote is not actually part of the conspiracy to abduct Drift, and has so far been suckered by Hollows. She does her best to keep the DriftCo campus safe, but if confronted with evidence of wrongdoing, she asks the party to stay where they are and heads off alone to confront Hollows. Unfortunately, the VP responds by modifying Banknote's memory using the scroll in her office, convincing the security chief that the characters are corporate saboteurs trying to steal the *autoscript*. This leads to a lockdown and a building-wide hunt for the party.

Banknote's desk at the security office contains a magical device that monitors all communications through the guards' *messaging stones*, which is staffed at all times. It also holds a family lithograph featuring Banknote, in a macaroni-encrusted frame engraved 'to Mother' that looks suspiciously freshly made.

Treasure. If Banknote is killed or incapacitated, any search of her turns up a master key that opens any door on the campus (including Drift's private office), 20 gp in a

pouch under her jacket, and a locket of her blue-skinned son Lionshield, who is a very good boy indeed.

NEXT MOVES

Once the characters have ascertained that Drift has been abducted, they should have enough clues to go to Swallow's Head—a remote and picturesque lookout a half-day's ride out of the city, and the site of the adventure's second act.

ACT 2: THE BLACK SITE

The subterranean fortress known as 'the black site' is concealed beneath the old lookout at Swallow's Head, just north of Waterdeep. There, the Lords' Alliance keeps numerous controversial items and individuals hidden away from the general public, safely out of sight.

When the characters arrive, read the following:

A half-day's ride brings you to Swallow's Head—what was once a picturesque lookout over the Sea of Swords, but which has long been reclaimed by the local flora. These days, the conical top of the lookout plateau is ringed by a dense border of untended pine trees and brambles. Those brambles are thick stemmed, razor sharp, and rise over eight feet high to top the plateau like a crown of thorns.

The area appears completely inaccessible to would-be vista-seekers, and the scene is eerily still, save for the wind in the pine needles and the occasional crow or scurrying critter. Other than the expansive foliage, the place is empty—desolate even—and completely devoid of buildings or structures. If there's meant to be some kind of facility here, it's very well hidden.

The bramble thicket and the pine trees completely surround the plateau, limiting access to the top of the old lookout. However, any character who succeeds on a DC 10 Intelligence (Nature) check notices that there's more to the brambles than meets the eye. The thick, spiky vines are not plants at all, but are entirely artificial—some kind of charcoal compound lined with copper cables, constructed in tangled knots, and somehow anchored to the tree line beyond them.

Attempting to cut through the brambles is a slow, painful process. Characters who attempt to do so for 10 minutes feel as though they've made little to no progress. Anyone who continues hacking after that gains one level of exhaustion before realizing that the brambles' unique artificial makeup makes them immune to most normal forms of assault, including fire and damage from non-magical weapons.

A successful DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check made to search the perimeter of the bramble thicket reveals that a number of scattered pine trees have a series of small niches cut into their trunks.

If the characters are somehow able to push through the brambles or make it past them in some other way, they find the top of the lookout a desolate if tranquil slope.

Roughly 120 feet across, the site is absolutely devoid of any interesting features.

A WATCHER IN THE TREES

At some point during the characters' investigation of or attempt to get to the top of the lookout, any character who succeeds on a DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check suddenly notices a figure watching the party, wedged into the branches of a nearby tree. The figure is happy to sneak forward and introduce himself as Hax Bon Tieren—a half-elf thief and conspiracy theorist, obsessed with uncovering the secrets of the Lords' Alliance. Hax uses the **spy** stat block and wears a *cloak of elvenkind*, and can share any of the following information:

- Hax arrived at the lookout earlier that morning, and has been watching the characters since their arrival. Though he was initially waiting for them to leave, it has since become clear that they do not work for the facility.
- He is convinced that a secret compound lies below the lookout, and happily shares his theories with anyone who will listen. ("These black sites, man, every city has one, man...")
- Hax is in the process of attempting to access the black site, hoping to retrieve proof of its existence for his newsletter. However, he warns the characters that "you have to be crazy to try to get inside."
- Earlier that morning, Hax witnessed a human and a tiefling using a two-key system to activate and retract a section of the brambles, allowing access to a hidden door cut into the rock of the plateau. (This was Molvano, the facility's intendant, and his apprentice, Greg Duveé, though Hax does not know this.)
- The keys were used simultaneously on opposite sides of the bluff, with one of the figures shouting a countdown sequence allowing both to synchronize their key turns.

If the characters can convince Hax that their cause is aligned with his, he is happy to accept their help to get into the black site. Having investigated the keyhole Molvano used, Hax has used his thievery skills to craft two keys he believes will fit the niches. But with no way to activate both keys at the same time by himself, he has been forced to watch and wait.

GETTING INSIDE

Ten magical keyholes are embedded in trees every 35 feet around the hem of the plateau, each capable of providing access to the black site at a specific time of day.

Though Hax doesn't yet know it, the underground black site complex revolves constantly within the sinkhole in which it was constructed. The interior entrance passageways (there are two, on opposite sides of the complex) align with each pair of access trees for a few short minutes throughout the day. Two individuals on opposite sides of the bramble thicket have to turn their keys simultaneously to open both entrances to the underground complex. Missing that window of time means finding the next tree in the rotation and waiting.

Hax has been waiting long enough that he's observed the keyhole niches in specific trees begin to glow from time to time. He has thus determined which set of trees

THE SWALLOW'S HEAD BLACK SITE

The black site at Swallow's Head is one of a number of such facilities dotted around the major cities of the Sword Coast. Designed to be run by a small crew of caretakers, the site is currently inhabited by its intendant, Molvano, and by his apprentice, Greg Duveé. Both spend their time cataloging, archiving, and monitoring and feeding prisoners. They also occasionally release the odd perilously dangerous magical artifact or dissident into Lords' Alliance custody.

The black site's unique design resembles four ring-shaped levels linked by curved stairwells, as seen on the map on page 9. The complex is built inside an excavated sinkhole shaft, with the secret behind its rotation found on the lowest level.

Access to the levels within the black site is dependent on the entrance used, with most levels connected only to the levels two above or below. When the characters enter by way of the administration level at the top of the complex, they then descend down two floors to the cell level. Descending two floors again reveals the golem level at the base of the complex. From there, the characters can ascend one floor to Molvano's level, then two more floors to the storage level (where Hax Bon Tieren entered).

In addition to its confusing alternating-level structure, the curved interiors of the black site conceal a central cylindrical chamber, which rises through all the other levels and is accessible only through a hatch in the golem level. This hidden space is where Mykon Drift is located.

Light. The interior of the complex appears dark when the characters first enter, but is illuminated as they explore. *Driftglobes* in sconces line all the corridors, lighting up when anyone approaches them and dimming again after they pass. Each room is likewise lit by *driftglobes*.

is set to trigger next. He gives the party one of his keys and heads around the plateau. As he does, he warns them not to lose the key, which he suspects will be required to leave the black site. Hax then swiftly disappears around the brambles, firmly but gently dissuading anyone from joining him if they suggest it.

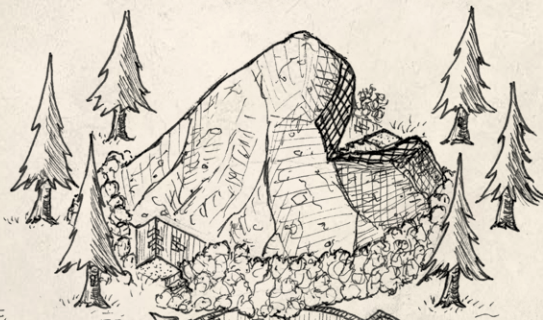
After a short time, the niche in the tree nearest to the characters begins to faintly glow, and they hear Hax's voice calling out a countdown. When both the party's and Hax's keys are turned together, the brambles coil inward, parting in a wedge to reveal a narrow set of descending stairs among the stones. The access is already slowly narrowing as the staircase rotates past, and is accessible only for two minutes.

ADMINISTRATION LEVEL

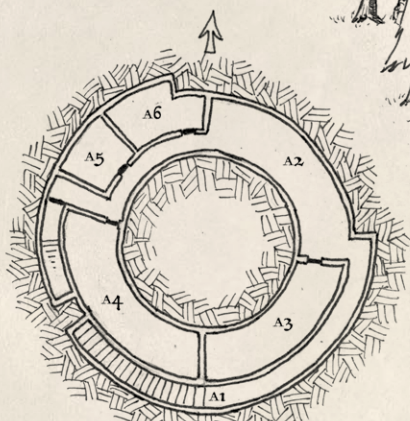
The topmost level of the black site is the complex's administration wing.

A1. BLACK SITE ENTRANCE

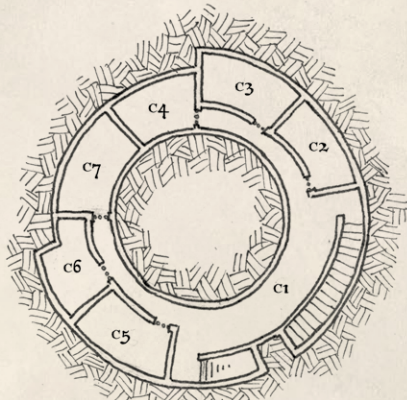
From the lookout, the stairs lead down to a dark, curved corridor with smooth stone walls. A niche set into the wall just inside the entrance takes the same key as the trees outside, retracting the brambles and allowing characters to exit the facility. The space rumbles constantly as the complex slowly rotates, and occasional strange creaks and thumps resound throughout. (As the characters descend deeper into the complex, these sounds grow louder.)



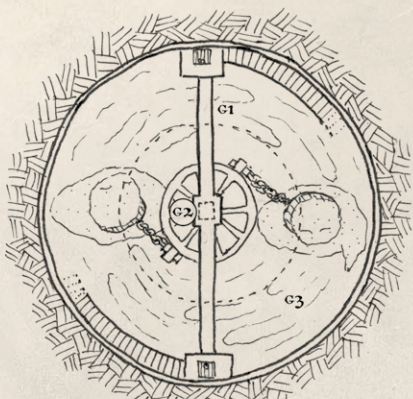
THE SWALLOW'S HEAD BLACK SITE



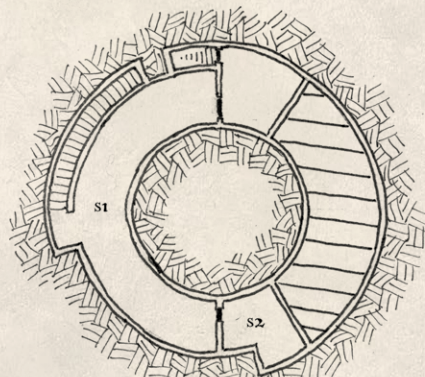
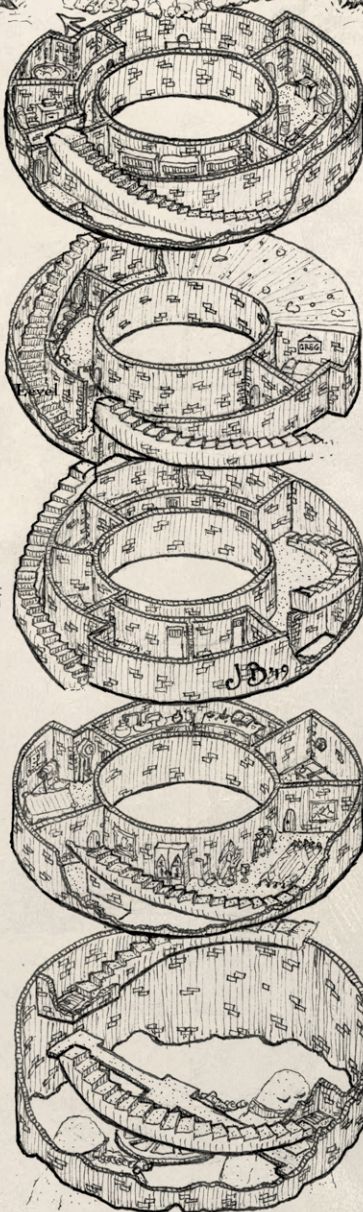
Administration Level



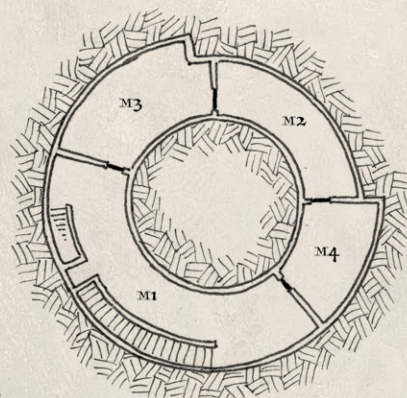
Cell Level



Golem Level



Storage Level



Molvano's Level



Drift's Sanctum

A2. BLACK SITE ADMINISTRATION HALL

The curved stairwell corridor opens up to a curved workspace that appears unattended. A desk with a bell on it stands at the center of the hall, and a number of wooden doors stand closed where the room narrows to a corridor at the far end.

Any character who looks over the desk spots a simple iron key sitting on a blotting pad. The key unlocks the door to area A3.

A3. TRAP ROOM

A locked wooden door is set with a grilled window, revealing what lies beyond to anyone who steps up. The door can be opened with the key from area A2, jimmied open with a successful DC 12 Dexterity check using thieves' tools, or forced with a successful DC 13 Strength check. The room beyond resembles a storage locker filled with shelves, most of which are stacked with small chests and boxes. On one shelf near the door, an incredibly tempting-looking sheathed longsword glows faintly blue. With a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check, a character also spots a hidden portcullis just inside the doorframe.

The setup appears too good to be true, and is something of an office in-joke. Touching any item in the room causes a magical alarm to sound out and the steel portcullis to drop just inside the door. This traps any intruders with two **piercers** hanging just above the shelves. The portcullis can be lifted with a successful DC 20 Strength (Athletics) check, or by one or more characters with a combined Strength of 20 or higher.

All the boxes and chests are empty. The longsword is a decorative replica owned by Greg, made of cheap metal and infused with a persistent glowing charm. If used in combat, it functions as a longsword but breaks the first time it hits.

If the characters end up trapped here, or if they hang around after setting off the alarm, Greg arrives after 10 minutes. Unless the characters make their presence known, he assumes the alarm is malfunctioning and attempts to reset it, then feeds the **piercers** sandwiches.

A4. LIBRARY OF BANNED TEXTS

The magically locked door to this area can be opened with the keys Greg or Molvano carry, jimmied open with a successful DC 14 Dexterity check using thieves' tools, or forced with a successful DC 15 Strength check. Within the library, a small reading desk features two ergonomic kneeling chairs (which Molvano likes for some reason). The shelves are piled high with tomes of old black magic, new tech magic, cultist ravings, and vexing amateur erotica.

Unhappy Assistant. Greg Duveé is reading in the library on his lunch break when the characters first enter. A chaotic neutral tiefling **acolyte**, Greg is the assistant to Intendant Molvano. If alerted to the characters' presence (if they made an undue amount of noise before or while breaking in, for example), Greg is sweating bricks when they appear, crouched behind an upturned reading table and waving his *wand of polymorph* at the door. If caught unawares, he'll be wedged uncomfortably into one of the chairs, reading an unnecessarily steamy fantasy novella.

Greg is nervous, erratic, and mostly hapless. He can, however, activate a magic remote control he carries to shut down the magical defensive field holding the mantle-core in area C2. (See "Cell Level" for more information.) That monster will sweep the complex, murdering everyone it finds. Greg knows he'll have to clean up afterward, though, so he uses the button only as a last resort.

Greg is trying his best to be a good apprentice, but if captured or charmed, he quickly spills the beans on the black site facility, including:

- Its purpose (a holding site for the Lords' Alliance)
- His job (looking after the prisoners)
- His boss (Molvano)
- His dreams (graduation at a proper magical academy and a nice, quiet job in the city)

He can also tell the characters that Mykon Drift arrived at the black site three months ago. The inventor was initially held on the cell level, but Molvano moved him two months ago to a secret location somewhere else in the facility. Greg suspects that this secret location must be inside the core of the complex, but has no idea how it is accessed.

Greg carries a heavy key ring bearing keys that open all the locked doors in the facility outside of Molvano's level, plus the key that allows access to the site.

A Little Light Reading. Characters who spend 10 minutes searching the library find meticulous notes kept by Mykon Drift outlining various trial experiments with something called 'the *autoscript*.' (The notes are unclear as to the particulars of this device.) Searching characters also find the original blueprints for the black site, which show the setup of the levels, reveal the secret room Mykon is held in, and show how that level is accessible from the basement catwalk.

The search also turns up a scroll case whose contents radiate magic to a *detect magic* spell. However, claiming the case risks awakening a magical tome that was used decades ago to imprison a warlock who betrayed the Lords' Alliance. The tome is wedged between the scroll case and a very badly written (and inexplicably banned) treatise on bunions. A character moving the scroll case must succeed on a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw or accidentally disturb and awaken the book. The magical tome uses the **flying sword** stat block with this change:

- Instead of its longsword attack, it casts either the *create bonfire* cantrip (DC 13; see the appendix) or the *fire bolt* cantrip (DC 13).

Remember that just about everything in the room is flammable.

Treasure. The scroll case holds a *spell scroll* of a random 2nd-level spell.

A5. KITCHENETTE

This area is a thoroughly gastronomically uninspiring galley kitchen. Here, the adventurers can uncover Greg's sandwiches, Molvano's leftover casserole, tea and biscuits, some outdated magazines, and an uncomfortable sofa.

A6. DISSOLVING ROOM

The heavy stone door to this area slides open on a pulley system, revealing a suit of *demon armor* hanging from a chain and resting partially submerged in a pool of bubbling liquid. Some time ago, the Lords' Alliance captured a pod of four **gray oozes**, and have set the creatures up here to attempt to dissolve the armor. It is not known how long this process will take, due to the qualities of the metal. While within the pool, the oozes cannot be detected. They become agitated and attack if anyone enters the pool or tries to take the armor.

STAIRWELL

As the characters descend the featureless stone stairwell at the far end of the level, the rumbling sounds of the complex are joined by an inexplicably deep thudding, keeping a slow and steady beat. The stairs descend two levels to the cell level.

CELL LEVEL

The third level down of the black site contains the cells where enemies of the Lords' Alliance are held.

This entire area is covered by an overlapping series of shimmering magical fields. One set of fields double-locks the door and wards the bars of each cell, causing them to glow a faint blue. While this field is active, a cell door can be opened only with the keys carried by Molvano or Greg, or with a successful DC 17 Dexterity check using thieves' tools. If this field is deactivated, a cell door can be opened with a successful DC 12 Dexterity check using thieves' tools, or forced with a successful DC 13 Strength check.

Each cell also contains a selective antimagic field that functions as the spell of the same name, to contain dangerous magical prisoners.

A successful DC 11 Intelligence (Arcana) check made to study any of the cells confirms the function of the fields. Both Molvano and Greg carry remote controls that can activate and deactivate any of the fields. Figuring out the remote control without assistance requires a successful DC 12 Intelligence check.

C1. CELL BLOCK CORRIDOR

Most of this level is given over to a curving corridor set with doors and barred gates at regular intervals.

C2. MANTICORE CELL

Behind a barred door locked and protected by magic prowls a **manticore**. It bares its teeth if anyone approaches, and repeats one whispered phrase: "You're mine." While the magical protective field is active, it prevents the manticore from breaking the door down or attacking targets outside the cell with its tail spikes. If the field is dropped, the manticore can easily force the door open and escape.

C3. SEA HAG CELL

This unlocked door features a cutout panel. If the adventurers look inside, they see a despondent old woman sitting on a bench, muttering softly to herself. This creature is actually a **sea hag** who was the first prisoner of the black site, and her spirit is now seemingly broken. She has forgotten most of her history, including her name. Because Molvano has so effectively broken the

hag, he does not bother locking the cell or turning on its antimagic field.

If the characters speak with her, the hag can reveal that she misses being able to talk to the young man in the cell next door. Very imaginative chap. But the ugly dragon-cat on the other side only ever says the same boring phrase. If encouraged to leave, the hag is more interested in heading to the kitchen in search of food than doing any real damage, but she is more than capable of defending herself if attacked.

C4. EMPTY CELL

The door to this unoccupied cell is open. A successful DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check made to search the cell reveals a white glob on the ceiling—actually a paper spitball that can be unrolled and read. It says "Moving down, moving up. New digs on the shoulders of giants. MD." Mykon Drift was held in this cell for a few weeks, befriending the hag next door before he was transferred to the secret workshop (see "Drift's Sanctum" on page 12).

C5. GHAST CELL

This cell features an unlocked door with a cutout panel. Any adventurer who looks into this shadowy room sees a human-sized figure tethered to a heavy bench by a 10-foot chain, the other end of which is attached to a steel collar around the figure's neck. The figure—a **ghast**—has a bag over its head and is presently catatonic. It attacks if anyone enters the cell and either addresses or touches it. If the ghast moves more than 10 feet, its speed is halved as it is forced to drag the bench along behind it.

C6. INTELLECT DEVOURER CELL

This solid iron door is locked but not magically protected, and features a sticky note written in Greg Duveé's shaky hand: "MOLVANO ONLY! (DANGEROUS MIND FLAYER)!" Thankfully, Greg has miscategorized the creature inside the cell, which is only an **intellect devourer**, sleeping harmlessly in a wooden cage. Molvano is studying the intellect devourer in an attempt to understand memory modification magic. The intendant was here just an hour ago, and has left a page of notes and half an apple. While he studies the intellect devourer, Molvano has deactivated the room's antimagic field.

Treasure. Molvano also left behind a sheath of six *autoscript scrolls of protection (aberrations)*. Any character who studies the scrolls notes that their lettering is eerily precise. In fact, they look more like they were printed than transcribed.

C7. HOODLUMS CELL

The door to this cell is locked and magically protected, and features a cutout panel. Inside are three teenage boys, utterly terrified. Questioning them reveals that they threw eggs at Molvano's house in Waterdeep the previous night. All of them were hit with a *sleep* spell and woke up in the cell with Molvano laughing at them. He still hasn't said how long he plans to hold them.

STAIRWELL

As the characters descend the stairs at the end of this level, the grinding vibration of the complex grows louder than ever, and the floor now seems to shake with each

deep thud. After descending two levels, the curving stairs end at a hatch in the floor. It is unlocked.

GOLEM LEVEL

The bottom level of the black site complex reveals the source of the site's endless rumbling—and a precarious crossing to reach the rest of the site.

G1. SUSPENDED CATWALK

Once the adventurers step through the hatch at the bottom of the cell level stairwell, read the following:

As you drop down through the hatch, you find yourself on a platform leading to a narrow iron catwalk with semiregular handrails, which spans a vast sinkhole. The entire complex must have been constructed within this natural shaft, deep below the earth. Oddly, the wall of the sinkhole appears to be slowly moving past the catwalk platform. As you look down into the murky half-light of the chasm below, you can see why.

Nearly a hundred feet below the catwalk, two gargantuan iron golems stand with downcast heads, facing in opposite directions. Colossal yokes around the necks and shoulders of the titans are attached to the buttressed foundation columns holding up the black site structure. As each golem plods forward with heavy steps, the whole complex slowly turns.

The iron catwalk is 120 feet long and 2 feet wide, and stands 90 feet above the sinkhole floor. At the opposite end of the catwalk is another platform, ladder, and hatch leading up to Molvano's level.

The dizzying sway caused by the titans' movement makes traversing the catwalk a nerve-racking but not impossible task. A character can cross the catwalk with a successful DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check, made with advantage if the party has access to suitable climbing gear. A character who falls can grab onto the girders and struts below the catwalk with a successful DC 15 Dexterity saving throw. A character faces almost-certain death on a failed save, if not from the 90-foot fall then from being crushed under the golems' feet.

If the adventurers linger too long in this area, you can decide to have Molvano come down from his level, having dealt with Hax Bon Tieren (see area M1 on page 13).

G2. UTILITY HATCH

Halfway along the catwalk, it widens to a 20-foot-square ledge with no handrails, exposing the characters to the prodigious drop below. Above this area is a concealed utility hatch in the ceiling, leading to Mykon Drift's secret workshop (see "Drift's Sanctum").

A successful DC 14 Wisdom (Perception) check reveals a keyhole-sized glowing niche in the ceiling 10 feet above the catwalk. The niche appears similar to those seen in the trees around the plateau, and takes the same key. Molvano fits his key to it using a *mage hand* spell. Accessing the door otherwise requires characters to somehow

ascend to the hatch while succeeding on a DC 13 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check to avoid tumbling off the catwalk.

G3. THE TITANS' MILL

What's down below? Only the grim circular march of the titanic iron golems, knee-deep in mud and crushed stone. This grinding rotation slowly erodes the sinkhole even further, causing the complex to sink incrementally deeper. Each decade, mages and laborers serving the Lords' Alliance are able to add an extra floor to the top of the black site complex.

The two golems have no reason to interact with the adventurers, though that won't stop them from stepping on someone unfortunate enough to fall from the platform. If necessary, each golem uses the **iron golem** stat block with these changes:

- It is Gargantuan.
- It has 299 (26d12 + 130) hit points.

DRIFT'S SANCTUM

The hidden core of the black site complex is the (temporary) home and laboratory of the kidnapped inventor Mykon Drift. When the adventurers ascend the hatch at area G2, read the following:

The hatch opens up into a cramped and impossibly tall cylindrical space, broken up by ladders and balconies into a multi-tiered inventor's workshop. Rows of tools and parts hang on hooks along the walls, accessible by grabber poles and thin, rickety ladders. Shelves and platforms built into the walls house prototypes of strange devices, all in various states of construction—and which tower above you in a way that feels incredibly impractical from a health and safety standpoint.

The ground floor where you stand holds workbenches, a stool, and a small cot, with what looks to be a bathroom opening up to one side. Even as you get your bearings, a tall figure emerges from that bathroom—with a small snub-nosed pistol in hand.

"I don't know who you are or what you've done with Molvano, but it doesn't matter. I'm not staying. I've got a product launch to get to."

The figure is, of course, Mykon Drift (a neutral good human **noble**). He doesn't look particularly imprisoned, having somehow managed to source the equipment and supplies to continue creating all manner of technomantic devices—including the small brass pistol he's currently holding. If it comes down to combat, the pistol gives Drift the following attack:

Technomantic Pistol. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 30/120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d6 + 1) piercing damage.

CHATting WITH MYKON DRIFT

Drift is surprisingly genial once the characters identify themselves, and is happy to share the following information with his would-be rescuers:

- The last thing he remembers at the DriftCo campus was losing consciousness in his office after drinking tea brought in by Rowena Hollows's secretary, Demeter Sook. He then woke up in a black site cell with Molvano watching over him. Drift can confirm that Rowena is working for the Lords' Alliance, who are behind his kidnapping.
- Soon after his internment, Drift was able to cut a deal with Molvano to be moved from the cells to this workshop. As part of that deal, he is meant to be designing prototypes for inventions to cement the authority of the Lords' Alliance. In actual fact, he's been planning a rather daring escape.
- The device that DriftCo is promising to imminently launch is the *autoscript*—Mykon Drift's greatest achievement. A technomantic printing press, the *autoscript* can print magical scrolls that allow any character to cast spells.
- Over the past two months, Drift has been modifying his *autoscript* to fly, attaching telescoping rotary blades and a rudimentary engine to the chassis to create a working gyrocopter. It's been tricky work, as Molvano regularly comes to test the device, but Drift is good at hiding his improvements.
- The inventor has been planning to fly straight up out of his workshop by blasting through the thin crust of the plateau above, but the existence of the magical defensive fields spread across the cell level has stymied those plans. If even a single antimagic field is activated, he fears that passing through that level will interfere with the *autoscript's* technomantic engines, crashing the gyrocopter.

EXPLORE OR ESCAPE?

Drift knows that both Molvano and Greg carry remote controls that can deactivate all the antimagic fields on the cell level. If the characters did not obtain Greg Duveé's remote control (see area A4), Drift asks them to either return to the hapless apprentice, or to continue on through the last two unexplored levels of the black site in search of Molvano.

If the characters have already stolen a remote control and can deactivate all the antimagic fields, Drift is ready to go.

The inventor grabs a pair of smoke-tinted goggles from his desk and orders you all to follow him as he climbs nimbly up a ladder toward a platform set partway up the workshop wall. Upon the platform sits a deviously complicated machine covered in tubes, pistons, and delicately whirring mechanisms—the *autoscript*! In one hand, Drift holds a heavy lead-lined tube. With the other, he fastens the goggles around his head. "Find something to hold on to," he advises as he straps himself in to the craft's only seat. "Things could get a little rocky."

The adventure then proceeds with "Act 3: Sky High."

MOLVANO'S LEVEL

The next level up from the bottom of the black site is Molvano's private level—a richly decorated space dotted with beautiful items and compelling art pieces.

M1. MOLVANO'S HALL OF FINE THINGS

Characters who ascend through the hatch at the far end of the catwalk on the golem level discover that the rumbling sounds of the complex are magically silenced. It's a great relief.

The characters find themselves in a comfortably appointed curving hall, set with partially open doors at either end. Fine furnishings and accoutrements give this area the look of a swanky study. Next to a fireplace is a scene that immediately demands attention.

A small curio cupboard stands open, a lock pick still hanging in its lock. Standing in front of the cupboard is the rigid body of Hax Bon Tieren, encased in ice, and with his face set in a horrified expression. A small two-wheeled cargo trolley waits beside him.

A voice suddenly rings out from the door farthest from the stairs. "Greg, what took you so long? Take our new guest to cell three, will you?"

Moments later, Molvano enters from his private residence (area M3), eating a grapefruit with a spoon. Molvano is a lawful neutral human wizard. Statistics for him can be found at the end of the adventure.

Treasure. The dozens of curios in the cabinet are mostly worthless porcelain figurines, but a quick search turns up 2d4 of them worth 50 gp each. One figure of a smiling boy is trapped with a magical curse that paralyzes a target under a layer of ice, as Hax has just experienced.

Molvano carries a heavy key ring bearing keys that open all the locked doors in the facility, plus the key that allows access to the site.

M2. MOLVANO'S LABORATORY

The far side of this level is the cozy laboratory where Molvano works (and where he hangs out even while not working when he needs to get away from Greg). A big comfy chair with an adjustable reading stand sits by a fireplace. In the center of the room, a **rug of smothering** lies in wait, programmed to attack anyone but Molvano who treads on it.

Most of the items and tools here are more academic than practical, but a character who searches the lab can assemble a set of tinker's tools. Molvano's diary is also here, which details how Drift was interred in the black site, his eventual transfer from the cells to "a workshop more suitable to his talents and station," and a small doodle showing how to access the workshop from the catwalk (see area G2).

M3. MOLVANO'S RESIDENCE

Molvano's tasteful quarters are dominated by a bed and an automatic massage chair of his own design. A wardrobe stands along one side of the room, its contents betraying a thorough lack of imagination in fashion and style. A side table holds an experimental artillery turret Molvano has been working on, which is thankfully out of order.

M4. MOLVANO'S GAMES ROOM

Fantasy ping-pong, fantasy darts, and fantasy twister are all on offer here. A construct resembling the construct seen at the DriftCo office idles at one end of the ping-pong table. It has wheels instead of feet, a ball-pivot waist, and a ping-pong bat clutched in its hand. The construct defends itself if attacked, using the **animated armor** stat block.

STAIRWELL

At the far end of area M1, a curved stairwell rises two levels to the black site's main storage hall.

STORAGE LEVEL

The second level down from the top of the complex is taken up by storage space and Greg's modest apprentice's quarters.

S1. STORAGE HALL

Opening up off an antechamber at the top of the stairs, this curved hall appears similar to the administration hall (area A2), and is outfitted with an identical desk and bell. Deliveries of rations and supplies are brought in to the complex through this area, which holds boxes of office supplies, dried food, toiletries, and other practicalities for long-term underground living.

S2. GREG'S "ROOM"

More of a cell, this small, windowless space holds only a small cot and an unfinished game of solitaire laid out on the floor. Any character who searches the area finds Greg's sketchbook under the cot, containing ideas for terrible inventions and a depressing amount of insight into a lonely young mind.

STAIRWELL

Opening up off the middle of the storage space, a curved stairwell rises two stories to end at a wall of brambles that moves slowly past as the complex rotates. This is the black site entrance opposite the entrance that led to area A1, and was used by Hax Bon Tieren. As in area A1, a key niche built into the wall retracts the brambles and allows characters to exit the facility.

ACT 3: SKY HIGH

When Drift activates his *autoscript* gyrocopter, read the following:

Twisting the lead-lined tube, Drift pulls it apart to reveal a red gemstone that begins to shine brightly. The inventor slams the gem into a housing bay at the tail of the *autoscript*, which groans and begins to whirl to life. The magical-spell-scroll-printer-turned-vehicle groans as bladed wings pop out of cunningly concealed armatures built into its printing press. The crystal begins to pulse with power as the engine revs up, the machine unsteadily lurching as you all hang on for dear life. Drift reaches out and taps a sequence of runes on a wall-mounted device that resembles a catapult loaded with a magazine of heavy wax-capped vials. The device flings its payload into the air—and an earth-shattering 'boom' cracks the ceiling asunder.

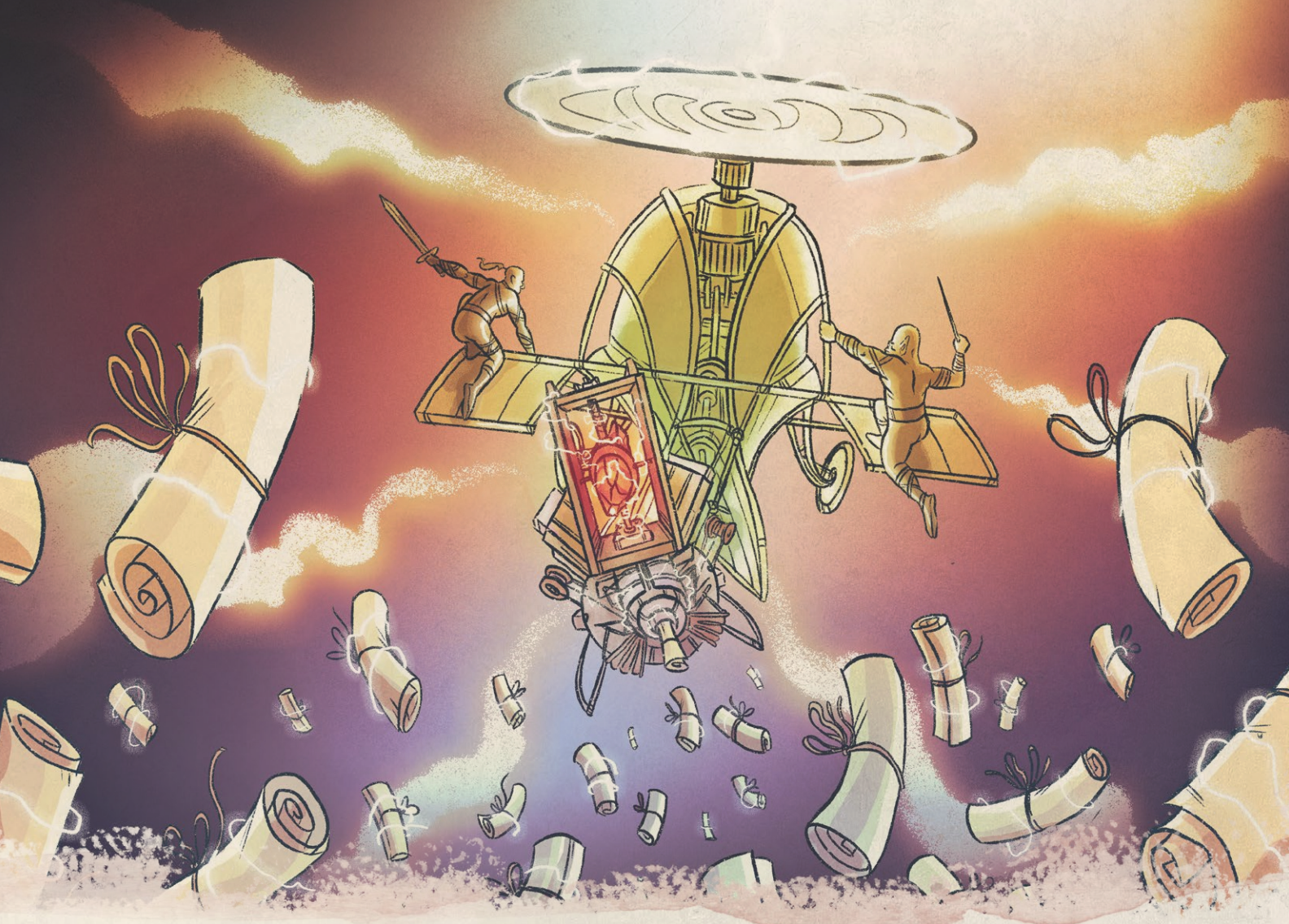
With a high-powered whine, the *autoscript* gyrocopter takes to the air, the power of its rotary wings whipping loose papers into a storm below you. The contraption flies through the ruined roof of the facility and bursts out into the world above—whereupon it becomes clear that you are not alone.

A small squad of Lords' Alliance soldiers on horse and foot have arrived at the bluff at the worst possible time. All of them react in shock to the *autoscript* gyrocopter's appearance—and three of the figures manage to grab onto the craft as it rises past them! All three immediately regret that decision as the vehicle lurches in protest, bobbing alarmingly in the sky but dragging the boarding party along for the ride.

"Too much weight! Deal with them!" Drift shouts. Racing down the trails of the bluff below you, the remaining soldiers give chase.

Drift is busy flying the *autoscript*, so it's up to the characters to deal with the two **thugs** and the **acolyte** who have made their way on board. The jury-rigged gyrocopter is not made for this many passengers, and is bobbing so low to the ground that the rest of the squad of six **scouts** can easily give chase. If the characters haven't dealt with the hangers-on first, the scouts following draw close enough to begin firing longbows after 1d4 rounds. They try not to hit Drift or damage the *autoscript*—which means more attacks on the characters, of course.

Fighting on board the flying *autoscript* is not easy. Any character hit by an attack must succeed on a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw to hang on, unless having taken appropriate means to anchor themselves to the device. In his pilot's seat, Drift is considered anchored. A character who falls might be snagged by any ally who succeeds on a DC 13 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. Or they might fall, taking damage according to how high off the ground they are.



ACTIVATING THE AUTOSCRIPT

The large, dimly pulsing crystal at the back of the *autoscript* is the focus for the device. Whenever a spell is cast into the crystal, armatures and actuators spin to life as the technomantic press gets to work. The following round, 2d6 *autoscript* spell scrolls of the same spell are spat out into the air, any one of which can be grabbed with a successful DC 10 Dexterity check.

The acolyte in the boarding party knows of the *autoscript*'s capabilities, and uses their first action to cast *guiding bolt* into the focus crystal. In response, the Lords' Alliance thugs attempt to grab the scrolls to blast the characters.

The *autoscript*'s gyrocopter form is a large, well-built device, but it can be attacked easily enough. It has AC 15, 30 hit points, resistance to piercing and slashing damage, and immunity to poison and psychic damage. If it takes 15 damage, the *autoscript* can no longer print scrolls. If it takes 30 damage, it falls from the sky.

Once the last foe on board has been defeated, Drift kicks a lever by his foot and the *autoscript* lurches high into the safety of the cloud cover, leaving any remaining ground-based pursuers behind.

AN UNNECESSARILY FLASHY ARRIVAL

Assuming that the *autoscript* emerges from the chase in flying order, Mykon Drift navigates his craft over the walls of Waterdeep to a landing bay above the DriftCo building, allowing the characters to disembark. (If the copter crashes, you decide what alternative means the characters can use to get Drift back to the city.)

From his vantage point, Drift gazes down at the assembled employees, arcanists, and media types all waiting for the reclusive inventor. With a wave and a dip of his goggles, Drift kick-starts the copter and soars down to the stage as a band plays the DriftCo company theme song. While it seems impossible that the entire episode was planned, you can't help but feel that this is only going to further solidify Drift's personal and executive brand.

A cough behind the characters reveals a security guard making the rounds. They politely but firmly report that the area is off limits, and ask the characters to follow them to the launch party downstairs. Lacking VIP access, the adventurers can enjoy a drink and some

canapes but aren't able to see Drift again, as the inventor disappears shortly after his keynote concludes.

AFTERMATH

When the characters return to Gribbits, read the following:

Gribbits the goblin is waiting for you when you arrive back at the detective agency, a satisfyingly large bag of money and a scroll case sitting on the desk in front of him. "Great job everyone. This came from Mr. Drift's office a few minutes ago." Gribbits clears his throat, leafing through a letter. "He says ... uh ... 'Thanks my friends, true like minds, visionary foresight, blah blah blah, brave enough to break the law for the greater good, armed soldiers, no doubt governmental retribution ... it, uh ... goes on like this for a page and a half.'"

Gribbits scans forward, his eyes widening in growing alarm. "Drift says he's going to go for a little trip, and that this is for our service and to cover any civil inconveniences his rescue and the inevitable official backlash might cause us." Gribbits puts the letter down carefully, a little wide eyed. "Are we in ... some kind of trouble with the government?"

The characters might well be. It's hard to tell if anyone got a look at their faces, or would recognize them if they saw them again. But raiding a Lords' Alliance outpost is likely to have repercussions. For now, however, all the characters can rest easy in the knowledge that the world is ... well, probably not that much safer. And if anything, the *autoscript* has pretty dire military implications. But to what purpose did the Lords' Alliance hope to put Drift? Was Hax Bon Tieren working alone? How many more facilities like Swallow's Head are out there? For the answer to questions such as these, tune in to the thrilling finale of the Gribbits Detective Agency!

TREASURE

The bag contains 1,000 gp. The scroll case contains 2d4 random *autoscript spell scrolls* of 1st to 3rd level.

LEVELING UP

Having successfully explored the black site and rescued Mykon Drift, the characters reach 3rd level. And with that, the adventure is done.

The Dragon Friends: Alex Lee, Ben Jenkins, Edan Lacey, Michael Hing, and Simon Greiner

Editing, Development, and Layout for *Dragon+*:
Scott Fitzgerald Gray

APPENDIX

This section features a new stat block, spell, and magic item featured in the adventure.

MOLVANO

Medium humanoid (human), lawful neutral

Armor Class 13 (*mage armor*)

Hit Points 33 (6d8 + 6)

Speed 30 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 8 (-1) | 10 (+0) | 12 (+1) | 16 (+3) | 11 (+0) | 14 (+2) |

Skills Arcana +5, History +5

Languages Common, Draconic, Dwarvish, Elvish

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Spellcasting. Molvano is a 6th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 13, +5 to hit with spell attacks). He has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *dancing lights*, *mage hand*, *prestidigitation*, *ray of frost*

1st level (4 slots): *alarm*, *disguise self*, *mage armor*, *scorching ray*, *sleep*

2nd level (3 slots): *detect thoughts*, *magic mouth*

3rd level (3 slots): *counterspell*, *fly*

ACTIONS

Quarterstaff. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +1 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2 (1d6 - 1) bludgeoning damage.

SPELL: CREATE BONFIRE

Conjuration cantrip

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 60 feet

Components: V, S

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

You create a bonfire on ground that you can see within range. Until the spell ends, the magic bonfire fills a 5-foot cube. Any creature in the bonfire's space when you cast the spell must succeed on a Dexterity saving throw or take 1d8 fire damage. A creature must also make the saving throw when it moves into the bonfire's space for the first time on a turn or ends its turn there.

The bonfire ignites flammable objects in its area that aren't being worn or carried.

The spell's damage increases by 1d8 when you reach 5th level (2d8), 11th level (3d8), and 17th level (4d8).

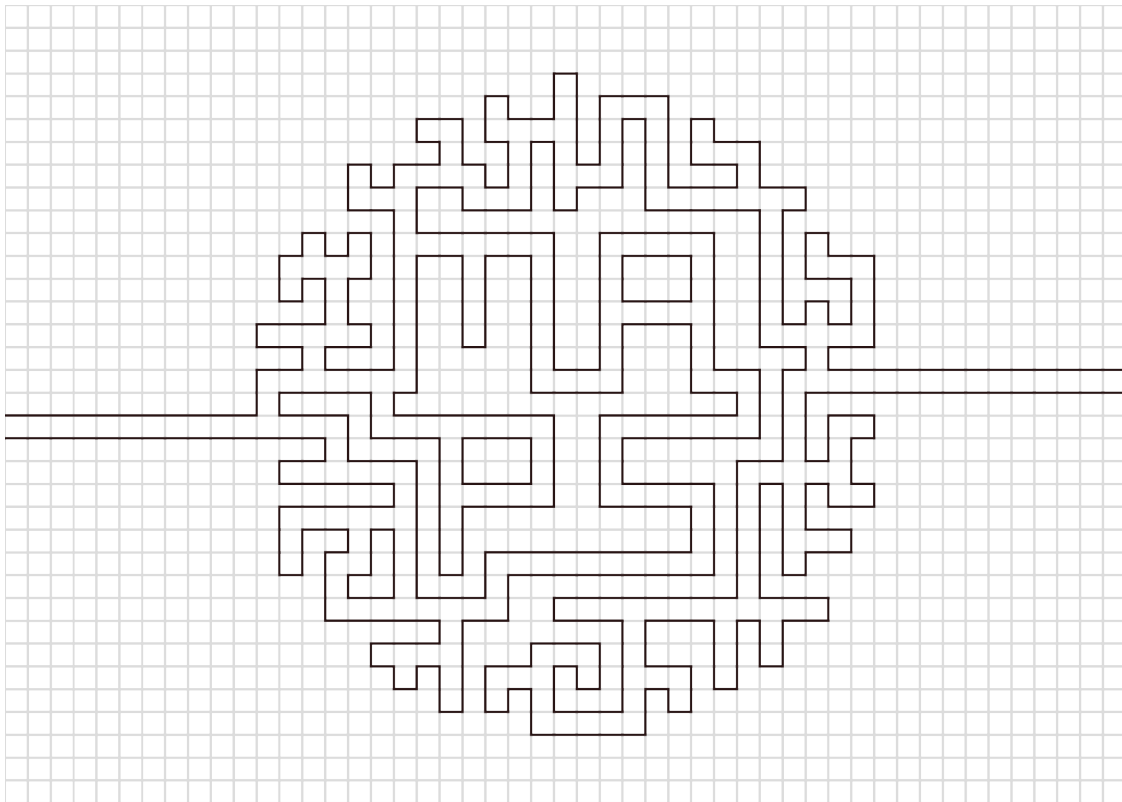
MAGIC ITEM: VETERAN'S CANE

Wondrous item, common

When you grasp this walking cane and use a bonus action to speak the command word, it transforms into an ordinary longsword and ceases to be magical.

Maps of the Month: Eberron, Tolstoff Keep and Halaster Blackcloak's Undermountain

This issues maps provide a handy guide to
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Halaster Blackcloak's Undermountain!



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EBERRON: RISING FROM THE LAST WAR

You've spent the past year working hard as an adventurer in the Forgotten Realms—killing monsters, clearing dungeons, negotiating with the local thieves guild. You're ready for a vacation. You *deserve* a vacation! Might we suggest the world of Eberron? Come enjoy its rich history built on heroic deeds, evolving magic... and yes, we suppose, its wounds of a long and devastating war. Here we offer a few further maps to help plan your travels!

Khorvaire

Most player characters begin their Eberron adventures on the continent of Khorvaire, home to a wide range of peoples and cultures. Once unified under the Kingdom of Galifar, today Khorvaire is split into many nations—some old, others newly born from the crucible of war.

Eberron: Rising from the Last War includes a poster map of Khorvaire. For ease of reference we've included a digital version below, along with different labeling options:

Tagged



(Select to view)

(high res image [here](#))

Untagged V1



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Untagged V2



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The City of Sharn

All the major themes of Eberron are manifest in Sharn, the largest city in Khorvaire. It's a place of magic, with sky-coaches circling mile-high towers and mystic forges toiling endlessly in the bowels. It's a place of adventure and intrigue. Humans make up about a third of its half a million people, and dwarves are a sixth of it; the rest of its population is a blend of every race found across Khorvaire. Refugees from the war still find their way to the city, along with tourists, spies, merchants, and folk hoping to find their fortune in the grandest metropolis in Eberron.

Also known as the City of Towers, Sharn can be a little confusing for visitors. You might reference the following cutaway view for help:

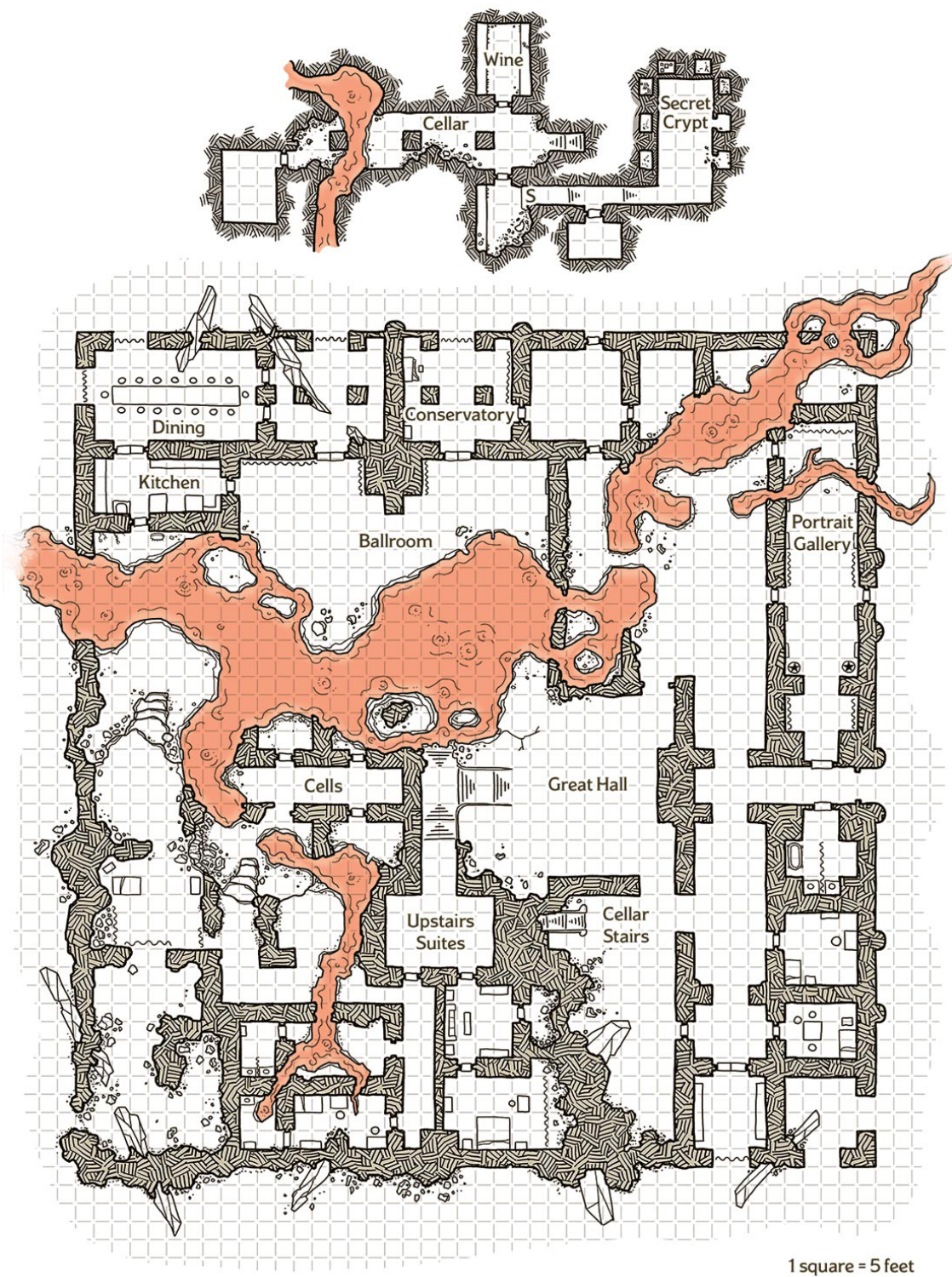
(high res image [here](#))

Demon Ruins

There are much wilder parts of Khorvaire than the City of Towers. Evil entities spawned at the dawn of time still haunt the land; and while the cities raised by those ancient overlords are now only ashes, the Lords of Dust still dream of restoring their primordial dominion. These lords maintain a variety of safe houses and sanctums across Eberron, but their most tightly bound locations are ruins scattered across the Demon Wastes.

We've included the map of one such ruin, unlabeled in various ways: without a grid, and also with the lava left uncolored in case you prefer to have this location flooded by water, mud, ooze... or how about chocolate? What group of adventurers wouldn't be drawn to a massive chocolate river!

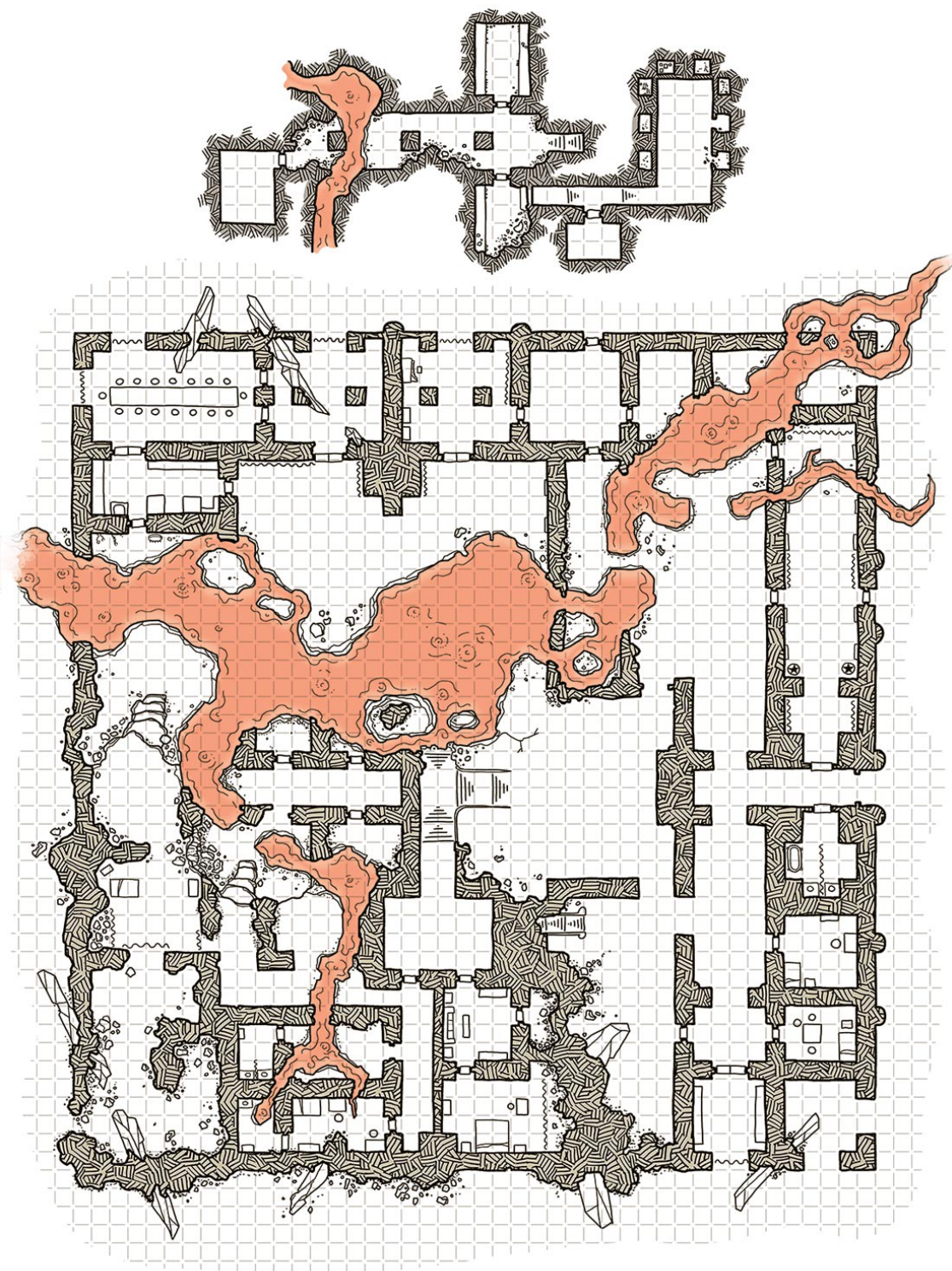
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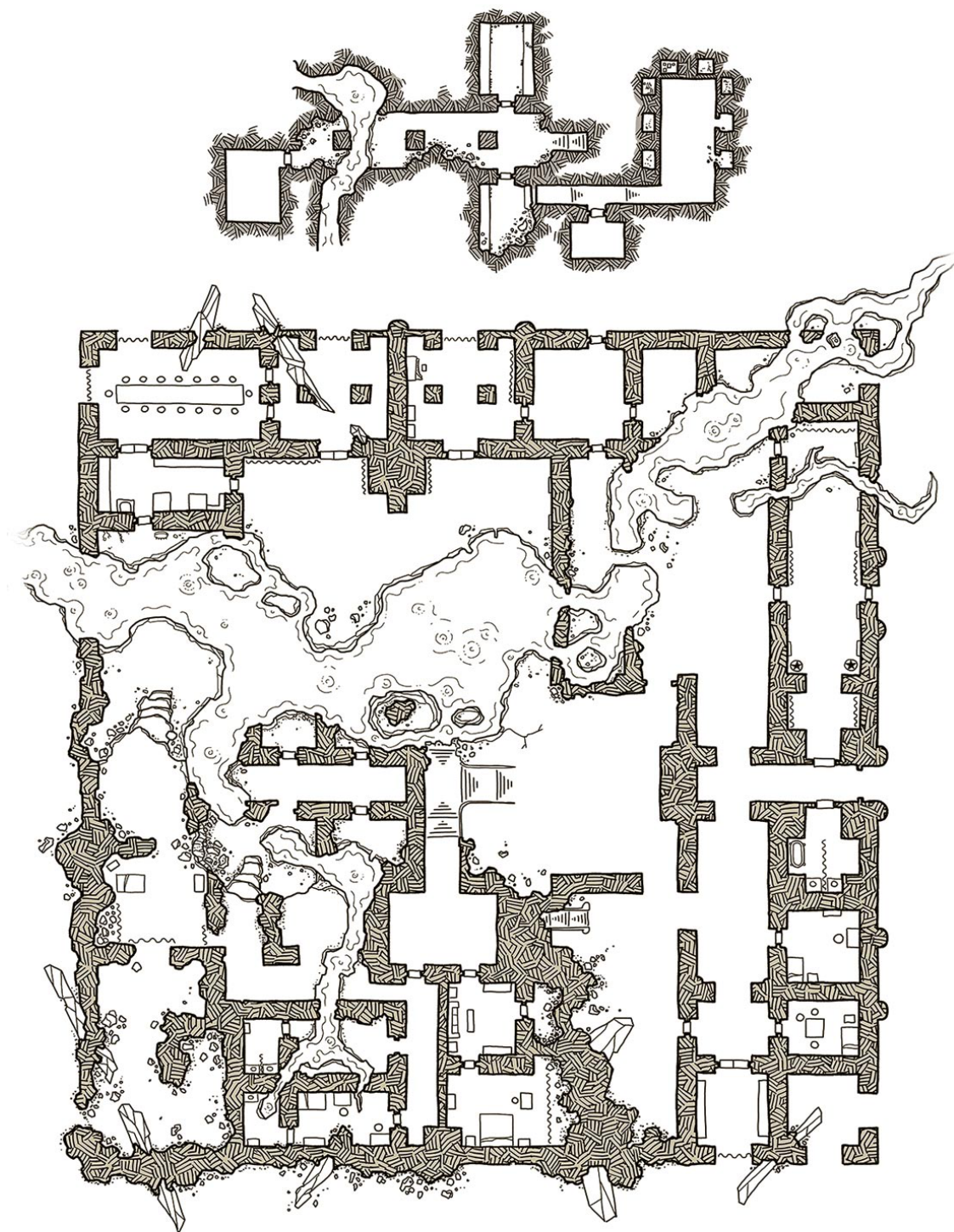
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Eberron: Rising From The Last War released on November 19, 2019 with an MSRP of \$49.95. You can order it now at your [local game store](#), from book stores such as [Barnes & Noble](#), as well as [D&D](#)

[Beyond](#), [Roll20](#), and [Fantasy Grounds](#). It's also available on [Steam](#), or online at retailers such as [Amazon](#).

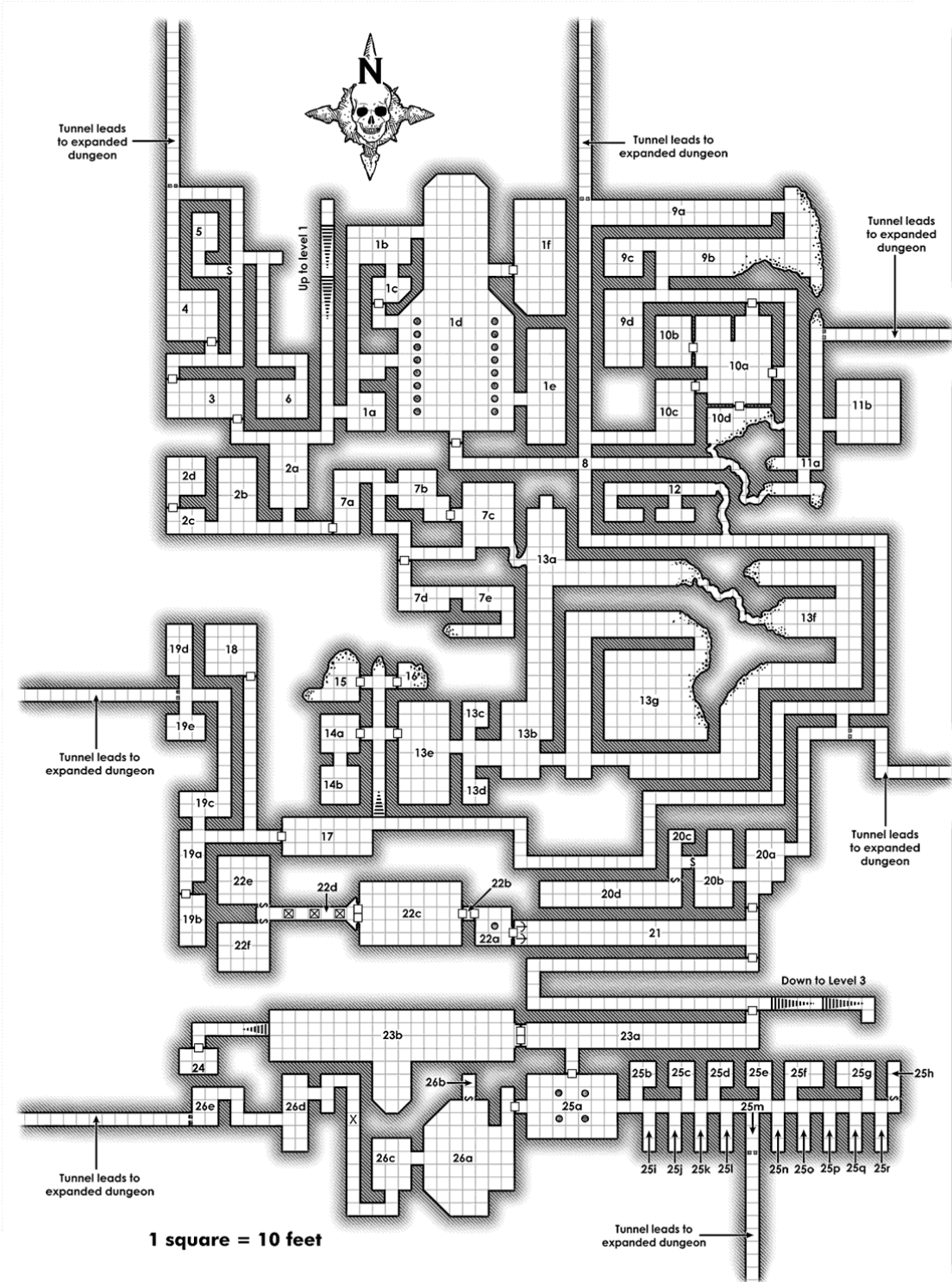
DUNGEON OF THE MAD MAGE

When it comes to dungeon maps, it's hard to beat the sprawling wonder of those found within *Waterdeep: Dungeon of the Mad Mage*. We've taken one level from the book for use in your games:

Level 2: Arcana Chambers

This level is particularly relevant because it includes a wererat gang (not to mention a tribe of goblins, a troublesome drow, and members of a doomed adventuring party), which is in keeping with the spirit of the Year of the Rat that has been infused throughout this issue of *Dragon*⁺.

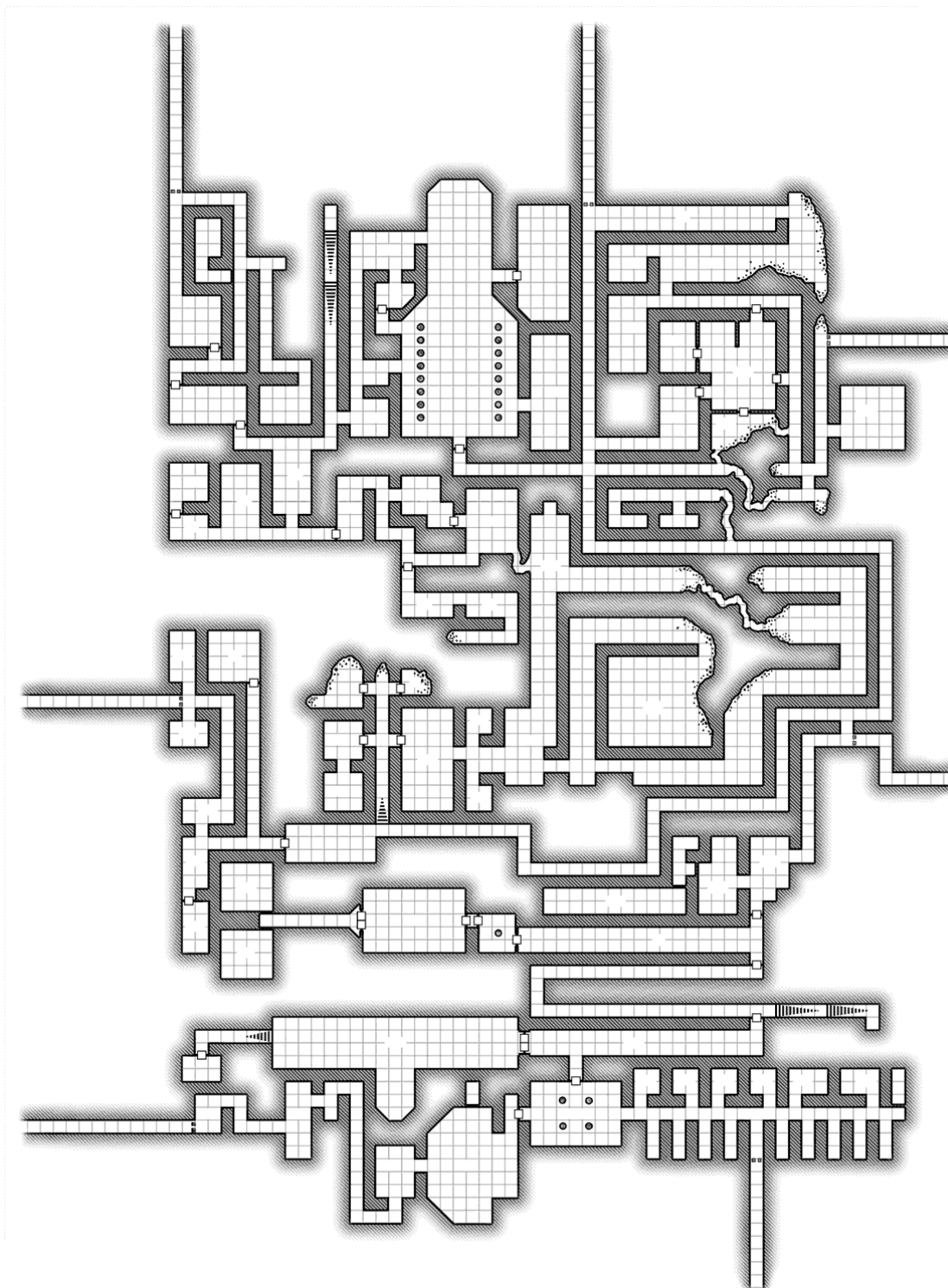
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Waterdeep: Dungeon of the Mad Mage released on November 20, 2018 with an MSRP of \$49.95. You can order it at your [local game store](#), from book stores such as [Barnes & Noble](#), or online at retailers such as [Amazon](#). *Waterdeep: Dungeon of the Mad Mage* is also available via [Fantasy Grounds](#), [Steam](#), [Roll20](#), and at [D&D Beyond](#).

TOLSTOFF KEEP

Elsewhere this issue, *Dragon Classics* looks back at *Exemplars of Evil*—specifically, the villainous Tolstoff siblings. Below we include maps from their chapter, including Tolstoff Keep and its interior encounters:

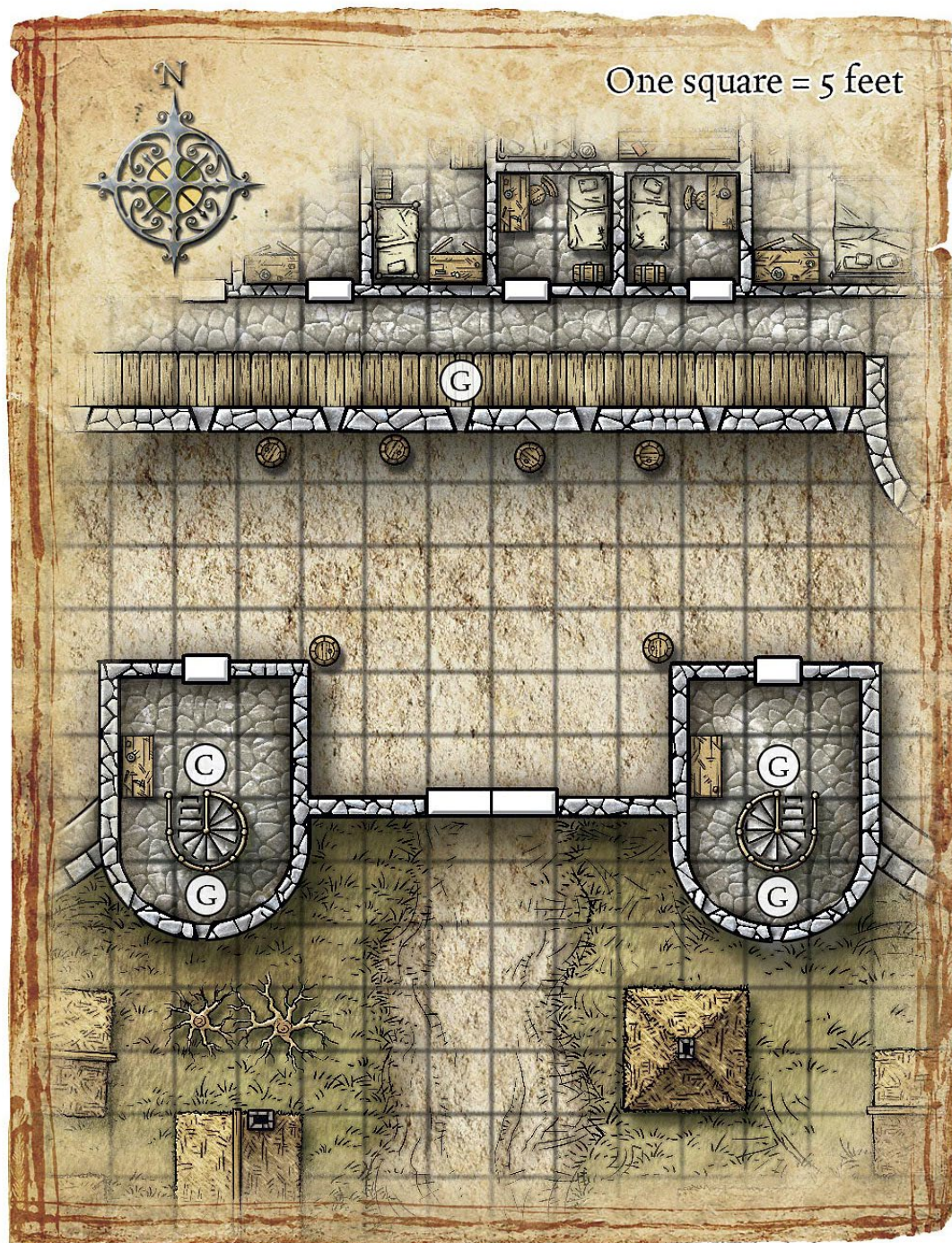
Tolstoff Keep



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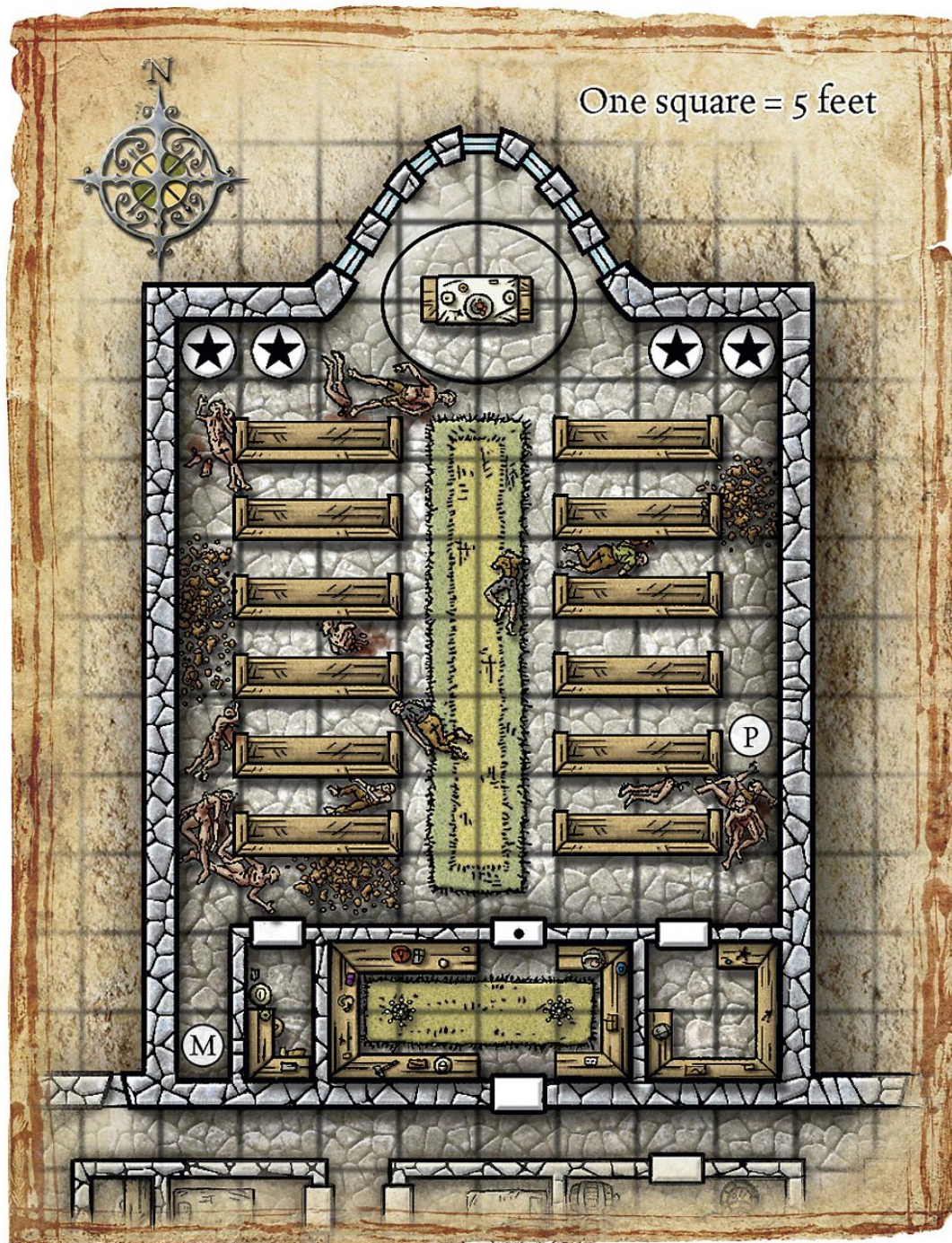
Barbican



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Chapel



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Catacombs



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Exemplars of Evil can be found at the DMs Guild in PDF form for \$14.99.

Cartographers

As always, our appreciation goes out to our amazing cartographers; this issue, these include Mike Schley, Dyson Logos, and Lee Moyer.



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Streaming Highlights

This issue's highlight reel includes Chris Perkins weaponizing backstories, political intrigue in *Dark Sun*, and a campaign full of fantasy authors.



D&D PRESENTS: T.O.R.C.H. LIVE!

D&D Presents is the latest liveplay from the mind of Dungeon Master (and D&D Lead Story Designer) **Chris Perkins** and featured a special game at **PAX East**. *Dragon+* spoke to Perkins ahead of the event to ask what we can expect from players **Mica Burton**, **Jonathan Indovino**, **Anna Prosser**, and **Nathan Sharp** and their characters.

“Rainer played by Nathan is the guiding force of the party. He’s a straight shooter with a clear moral compass who’s out to do right in the world. But he’s left behind the Order of the Gauntlet, this do-gooder society of knights, to strike out on his own with the goal of bringing justice to an unjust world,” Perkins reveals.

“Rainer is paired off with Anna’s character, a bard named Delvenie

who is a bit of a chaotic creature. She left home to find the stories and engagement that were missing from her life, and she might turn out to be something of a Jaskier-type figure as we've seen in *The Witcher* TV series. She's very likable and outgoing. She sees the stories that can potentially unfold and believes Rainer can help guide her to the adventure she craves.

“And then you've got the two tieflings Rainer ends up bringing into his party, Setsuna and Valence, played by Mica and Jonathan. They are traumatized beings who have not had pleasant lives. They're searching for a way to get past the trials and tribulations that have defined their existence up to this point so they can leave a positive mark on the world. They're reluctant passengers on a journey that Rainer has promised to take them on. But in Rainer and Delvenie they find two friends who accept them for what they are.

“It's an intriguing group. From a DM's point of view, I'll discover things about them as they play these characters and will be taking copious amounts of notes. I will then leverage that for the sake of drama. Or perhaps an unkind word than leverage is 'weaponize'.”

PAX East attendees got an exclusive sneak peek behind the scenes as the cast members took to the stage for a Q&A panel ahead of the live game. Then a couple of days later the members of T.O.R.C.H., this unlikely band of heroes with a penchant for the comical as well as the emotional, played their first live game together.

WATCH ON TWITCH FROM 4HR 30

RISE OF THE VEILED ALLIANCE

Dungeon Master Donathin Frye packed in his job as a bartender on New Year's Eve when he tweeted that he was now going to be working full time creating stories. He's been hired by the LFM Network to create their first livestream, and alongside his freelance publishing work, writing adventures, and working on a few other upcoming projects he “just wouldn't have time to do everything and work elsewhere. I looked at it and thought, ‘This is what I've been working towards! I want to go all in on it.’”

LFM Network handed him the creative reigns to establish the story and setting he wanted. Frye decided his campaign, named *Rise of the Veiled Alliance*, would be *Game of Thrones* meets *Mad Max*, in a pulpy, low-fantasy world with weird alien monsters.

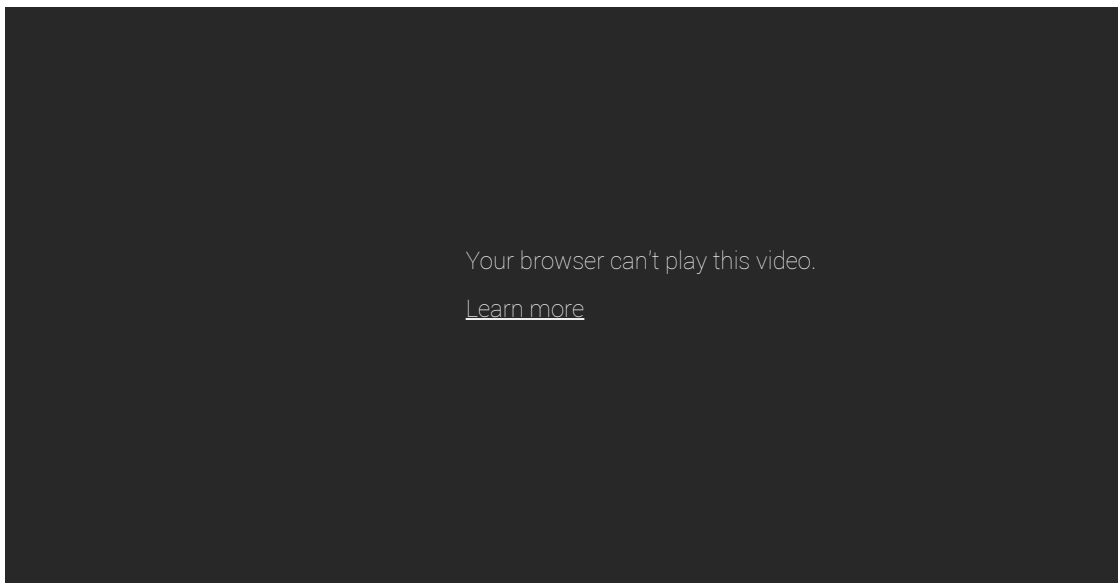
“I really enjoy some of the older settings of Dungeons & Dragons which haven’t yet officially made it to fifth edition. I wanted to explore Dark Sun as it’s a setting I played as a teenager and I haven’t been back since. I think I understand it now in a way I wouldn’t have understood it back then.”

Rise of the Veiled Alliance takes place in the city state of Balic, which is a lesser-known area of Dark Sun on the edge of the Silt Sea. Also known as the City of Sails and the Shining Jewel of the South, it is the only democracy in this dying world.

“Despite being a democracy, Balic is not really free. The political soul of the city is twisted and hungry. Although there are democratic elections and the illusion of freedom, the sorcerer king—and there’s a sorcerer king in every city in Dark Sun—doesn’t call himself a king, he calls himself a ‘caesar’. He is a dictator and is just as evil and self-interested as any of the other dark lords of Dark Sun. That political element is going to be a big part of our campaign.”

Krystina Arielle plays elf court counsel Akasha, **Sam de Leve** plays half-elf scion Merula, **Cord** plays turtle guard Kronqual, and **Toby Osmond** plays elf Praetor Rysar. Frye says most of the players have embraced the political aspects of the game and created either established politicians trying to hold onto their power or younger politicians trying to change things for the better.

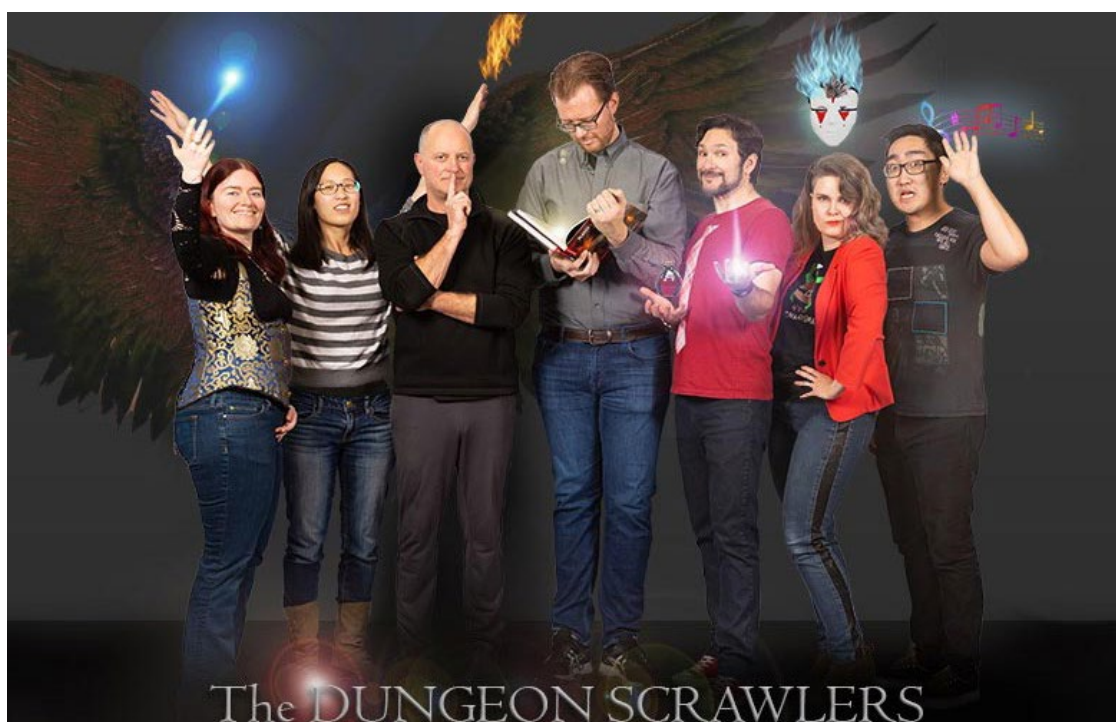
“That should create a lot of interesting conflict and storytelling. I’ve also built a substantial ruleset for social encounters. Instead of rolling Persuasion or Deception checks, my system works like a D&D fifth edition combat encounter,” he explains. “You have initiative, turns, actions, and bonus actions. Your action might be to manipulate someone and try and convince them of something. Or you might support another person’s argument if it’s a group social encounter. The idea is that those social encounters will be interesting but they’ll also still be D&D. Don’t worry, there will still be combat!”



Rise of the Veiled Alliance airs every Tuesday at 8pm EST (5pm PT) on **Twitch** and you can watch previous episodes on **YouTube**.

DUNGEON SCRAWLERS: WESTGATE IRREGULARS

We all know the effort that goes into getting a group of players together for a regular D&D session. In the case of the Dungeon Scrawlers, which requires seven people with the crazy schedules of fantasy authors to be in the same place at the same time, even more so!



“Part of it is that we’re authors, so we’re busy trying to write novels. Each of us might have two full time jobs or more. It took a year and a half of discussing and debating and shifting things around until we got this one period of time when everyone is available,” Erik Scott de Bie tells *Dragon+* about the first Dungeon Scrawlers twitch campaign, *Westgate Irregulars*, set on the Dragon Coast in the panoramic Forgotten Realms setting from Wizards of the Coast.

“Even as it is, it’s still not easy to get everyone there all at once. Erin has two small children and she can only get out of the house at a certain point, and Rhiannon has to leave by 9pm because she gets up really early to work. This is the narrow two-and-a-half-hour window that we can pull off, but it’s working okay so far.”

Not all that pre-launch time was spent discussing scheduling, of course. As Dungeon Master, de Bie ran a preliminary arc of the campaign for Erin M. Evans, Rhiannon Held, Randy Henderson, Stephen Merlino, Emily Teng, and Yang-Yang Wang, so that the players got to know each character pretty well by the time the *Westgate Irregulars* stream launched in early January.

And what about the characters’ initial design? These are authors we’re talking about; did they all produce a short novel introducing their D&D characters to the Realms?

“No, just like most groups it varied widely. I traded something like fifty emails with Stephen about Stirge and his family and what’s going on there. But I needed almost nothing from Emily for Kayleth, beyond the idea that there’s some shady stuff in her backstory and she really likes the horse she has now,” de Bie says.

“Erin’s character Tsetseliya also came with just a few strong but loose concepts. She has a certain series of events—where she was born, her father, the whole witch thing, the swearing of the oath, the pact, and the forging of the pact—but after that it’s not super detailed. A lot of information about her warlock patron comes directly from us working together behind the scenes to make that story compelling and interesting. Then there’s a lot of empty space that we can fill in as we go along. D&D is a collaborative process and Erin and I have plans.”



In order to bring the group together and figure out connections between them, de Bie set up a “session zero”: a first chance for both the characters and the players to interact, as well as establish some lasting themes.

“Session zero is a really powerful tool for both a DM and a group because it’s low pressure. You don’t feel like you have to perform as soon as you sit down at the table. And you don’t have to impress people with your character-building skills because we can all work together on what your characters are going to be like,” says de Bie.



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[Learn more](#)

To accomplish this, de Bie set up a more unusual, story-rich experience for the *Westgate Irregulars*' first outing.

Rather than a standard D&D “meet-in-the-tavern” session zero, he ran the *Fiasco* roleplaying game, in which ordinary people with powerful ambition and poor impulse control play out stupid, disastrous situations, often led by greed, fear, and lust.

“Fiasco is a slightly cracked storytelling game, based on a Coen brothers movie format. It sees a bunch of incompetent people trying to get something done and inevitably things go poorly for them. *Fiasco* uses a series of narrative hooks and story elements that show up in the game. When you first sit down, everyone randomly picks a relationship between their character and the person sitting to their right and the person sitting to their left. I created a full list of options, and that’s where the relationships among the characters come from,” he says.

“Some of the most iconic things about the characters come from that original session, such as Tsetseliya having a golden hand branded on her arm from what she thinks was an abyssal portal. The legacy of that initial meeting point is that it will come back to influence the story.”

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[Learn more](#)



Dungeon Scrawlers: Westgate Irregulars airs on Wednesdays at 6:30pm PST (9.30pm EST) on the official [GenCon Twitch channel](#) and you can watch previous episodes on [YouTube](#). Visit the [Dungeon Scrawlers website](#) for more information.

RIVERBREAK

Arthur Wright (Dungeon Master for UpUpDownDown's *Rollout D&D* campaign) and his wife Julie have built an incredible homebrew world around the city of Riverbreak. It contains a set of islands where the noble houses reside, a commerce and trading section attached to the docks known as The Hollow (home to a sect called the "Greed Pact"—warlocks whose powers are fueled by money), an artsy area called The Dalliance... we could go on for some time, it's such a detailed world.

"My wife and I have developed the city of Riverbreak from the ground up. We've spent many, many hours talking and writing stories. Riverbreak is known for two things: its magic users and its wine. It's where all magic users in the world are trained, in a place called The Enlightenment. There's also a special kind of wine called dragoncrush wine, which is made in The Crush by a sect of druids who keep the weather conditions perfect to help the grapes to grow."

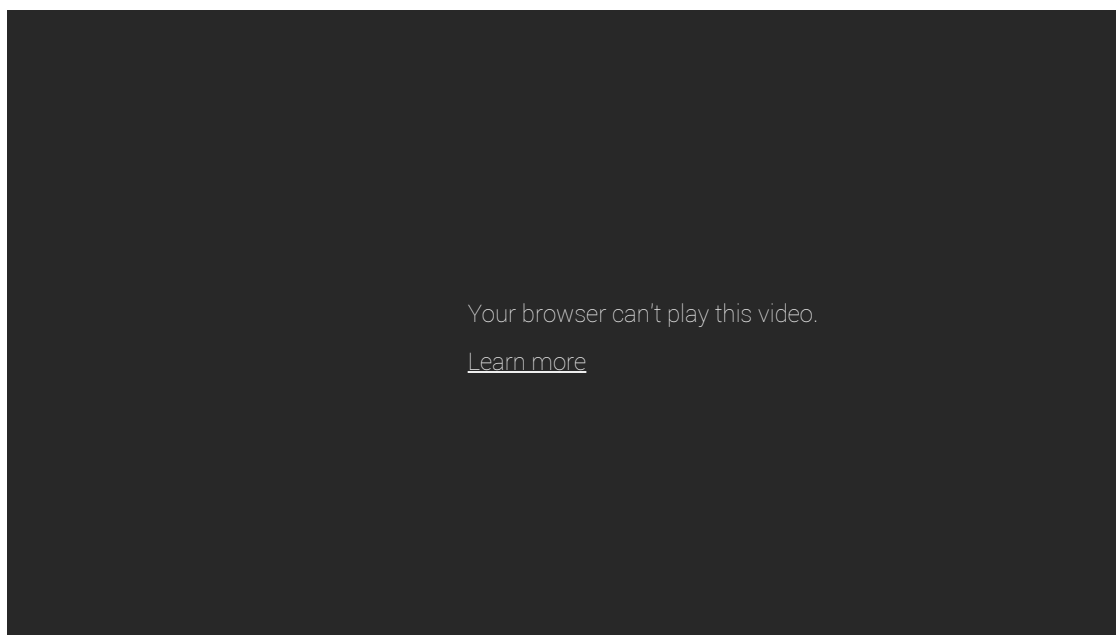
The history that's been created is a labor of love only matched by the incredible sets the couple have built. As we took a digital tour, Art showed off a suspended set of buildings hanging beneath a large structure. Known as The Hive, these are the slums the city's poor have started building below the bridge, complete with pulleys to lower boats down into the water. The detail is incredible; in fact, so much so that it was something one of the players in their regular Friday night game couldn't truly appreciate, until recently.

"We've been trying to play with one of my players who lives in Baltimore using Skype and Hangouts, so when Vorpals Board

approached me with its video software, camera arm, and scanning box I was intrigued,” Wright remembers. “The ability to show off the terrain in such an easy way is amazing. In the first session our friend in Baltimore said: ‘Oh my God, I can see the grid on the table! That’s my mini?’ This group has been playing together for ten years if not more and this is the first time he was able to see which mini was actually his. Being able to do that really makes the D&D experience very enjoyable.”

The internet has long been celebrated for bringing together people who would otherwise be separated by great distances. Wright is now putting that to the test with his latest campaign, linking together an otherwise scattered group of players.

“In our new *Riverbreak* livestream, there are five players and myself as the DM,” Wright says. “Chris Sims is in Austria, Brianna Flaim is in Oregon, Ember Moon of the WWE is in Texas, while the rest of us—including Dan Masucci, better known as **InkdMage from Instagram**—are in Upstate New York. Yet it’s almost like sitting around the table to play with five of your friends.”



Riverbreak streams every other Wednesday at 1pm EST (10am PT) **live on Twitch** and you can watch previous episodes on **YouTube**.

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FOR 5TH

20 House Rules for Fifth Edition

It's said that the house always wins—or in this case, rules. Sam Hanshaw offers up 20 house rules (for 2020, naturally) to use around your game table!

Sam Hanshaw

D &D is one of the most flexible games in the world, and you're free to play it how you want. House rules have been a part of the game from the beginning, with rules being ignored or added as a matter of convenience by play groups.

I'm starting 2020 with a list of house rules I've come across in my time playing fifth edition. Sometimes a good house rule can streamline things and let you focus on what's important, while other house rules can add a new element to your game. In the end the house rules your group chooses to run are entirely up to you, but here are some examples to get you thinking!

Roll Stealth only at the moment of possible detection.

Players make (Dexterity) Stealth rolls only when someone is in a position to see them or look for them. The *Player's Handbook* doesn't say exactly *when* players are supposed to roll their stealth skill and many players will use the skill as if they're "entering stealth mode" with a roll up-front, so this is more of a clarification of how I handle things. When a character announces they are going to creep somewhere, I don't ask them to roll. Instead I wait until someone could see them or is looking for them and ask the player to roll at that moment of discovery. I find this adds tension and reduces the total number of rolls in a session. These rolls can be made in secret if the enemy is also hidden.

Small enemies share HP as a squad and attack as one.

When I put my players into a fight in which they are outnumbered, I will often make groups of weaker enemies into squads. A squad might contain five members, and the HP for the squad equals the sum of all the participants. If a player deals more than enough damage to kill a member, the extra damage stays with the squad. Sometimes it's possible for players to kill two or more members with a single swing. The squad acts as a single unit on the squad's initiative and only makes one attack, enhanced by the number of squad members. For instance, if I want a squad of four hobgoblins to attack a player, I'll give the squad 44 HP (the total of all the hobgoblins), and I'll have them make a single attack giving them a +2 bonus for each member of the squad alive beyond the first, and I'll similarly give them a boost to the damage of the hit for each member participating in the

attack. This rule allows groups of weaker enemies to still threaten players, while also cutting down on the total number of rolls needed in a fight. Another option for this exists in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, under **Handling Mobs**.

Minion enemies have 1 HP and don't take half damage on failed saves.

This is another way to add a lot of enemies to a battle, while also circumventing the need to track dozens of HP values. I like using this rule to represent hordes of enemies like a rat colony or an attack from goblin warrens. You might remember this rule from an earlier version of D&D.

Max damage + die roll for crits.

When you roll a natural 20 on an attack, add up the damage dice you rolled and then add the maximum they could have rolled to that number. I'm a huge fan of rolling once for your attack, so just take that d20 and your damage dice and roll them together. This house rule streamlines critical hits, while also giving them a more potent boost to damage. This makes every critical hit dangerous and exciting but be aware that it can also make fights more dangerous as both players and enemies will be dealing a little more damage overall.

Team inspiration.

I've run games where people are reticent to use their inspiration, and even less likely to send it over to someone else. To remedy this, I've added a bowl that I put something in to serve as a group pool of inspiration. I limit the bowl to holding four pieces of inspiration at a time. I've found that people are more likely to use the inspiration when doing this, knowing that there might still be some left over.

Inspired saving throws: players can spend their reaction and a point of inspiration to gain a saving throw reroll.

Sometimes a saving throw is crucial to a player and when that three shows on the die their heart sinks. Danger is a part of every D&D campaign, but if you want to give your players a little more hope against that beholder, consider this house rule.

“I have a thing for that”: Allow a player to spend a point of inspiration to “remember” their character purchases a mundane item.

They deduct the gold as if they bought it earlier and just lost it in their pack. Adventurers carry all sorts of things in their packs, sometimes they carry so many things they lose track of some of them, only to remember them at just the right moment. If you want your players to have that sort of luck, consider this house rule!

“I know someone for that”: Allow a player to spend inspiration to describe a contact who can help with the current situation.

Obviously, there are limitations to this, but this is a great way to allow players some agency in creating a new ally. I’ve found this works really well for urban campaign settings and after players have done it once or twice, they feel more invested and connected. Another version of this rule has been discussed online, here’s a [twitter thread for “I know a guy,”](#) a version of this rule with a little more risk involved.

Allow the players to swap initiative rolls with one another before combat starts.

Sometimes players have an idea that requires teamwork based on a specific order they’d like to act in, and this allows them to always get the order they want. This isn’t one I personally use because I use the slightly more restrictive house rule that comes next.

On the first turn of combat, allow players to lower their initiative to one point lower than that of an ally.

Sometimes a character really wants to go after someone else, and it’ll help their teamwork. I’m willing to let them assign a penalty to their own initiative to make that happen. Sometimes this results in the whole group wanting to go in a specific order and they’ll drop their initiative to do it. Most often this results in their enemies going

before all of them in a big block, which tends to work out poorly for the players, so they should exercise this option with caution. Each of these rules allow players to manipulate their initiative at the start of combat. If you don't like the idea of players switching up their initiative but they are clamoring to set up the cool combinations they envisioned, remind them of the ability to **Ready as their action**. "Ready" is a way for them to set up their tactical combinations while maintaining initiative as rolled.

During character creation, allow players to apply one of their attribute bonuses to a different stat.

Sometimes players box themselves into picking races based on their ability bonuses. I like to allow some flexibility and encourage my players to give me a neat backstory that fleshes out their alternate bonus.

Fumbles in combat leave you open so that your enemy can immediately use their reaction to make an attack against you.

I've seen a lot of DMs using fumble tables to punish people for rolling a critical failure during combat. Personally, I feel that rolling a one and automatically missing is punishment enough. But I also understand that sometimes it can be cool to have those fumble moments. I think this house rule strikes a good balance where the defender must expend a reaction to take advantage of the opening. This also means that your fighter who is making several attacks a round doesn't get punished super hard for rolling a one. Since they

are often trying to tank hits for other party members this can actually work to their advantage if it allows an ally to escape or move past the enemy they're engaged with!

If a character misses a check by three or less offer them the chance to succeed but with a penalty, or have a negative consequence associated with their success.

Sometimes a failure at a skill can be a setback for the players or the DM. In instances of close calls, I like to offer players a tough choice or have some extra consequences come as a result of the check. Some examples:

Athletics: You successfully swing on the chandelier, but suffer a level of exhaustion.

Investigation: You manage to search the desk and find the hidden compartment, but you knock a vase to the ground, alerting enemies in the next room.

Deception: They'll go along with your lie, but only for a bribe or a favor in return

DM rolls player death saves behind the screen.

This is something I have done ever since I had an NPC ally drop to 0 HP during a fight and rolled their death saves behind the screen. I noticed that my players were far more concerned for that NPC's safety than they ever were when each other were on the ground and

bleeding.

Characters gain a level of exhaustion at end of combat if they failed a death save during that combat.

This is another house rule that goes a long way toward encouraging players to help each other out, and from a roleplaying perspective it adds some additional opportunities around characters really acting like they got their bell rung after a difficult fight. I'd like to thank WOTC Video Content Strategist **Trick Jarrett** for introducing me to this rule.

Give characters an additional tool proficiency or language for each point of Intelligence bonus they have.

I've experimented with this one and feel it gives high Intelligence characters a more worldly and cultured feeling, without causing them to become imbalanced.

Give players an extra attack bonus for good description.

This rule is good if you don't play with inspiration, otherwise I

recommend awarding inspiration for particularly good descriptions. My rule of thumb when employing this is that any good description gives an extra +1 to hit or +1 on spell save DC. If the character expends a resource or utilizes the environment or another item they have, give +2. Be careful with employing this rule too often as it can lead to rewarding only the extroverts in your group or create longer combat encounters as players describe the arc of every swing.

Characters can turn a hit into a critical by suffering two exhaustion levels.

I like this house rule because it's not something that's abusable, characters aren't going to want to volunteer to suffer exhaustion levels on whim, but it can result in great signaling events, when the fight comes down to the very end and the character and their nemesis are both cut and bruised. Having a player commit to have their character deal what will probably be the final blow can make for a great cinematic moment. Thanks to Trick Jarrett once again for introducing me to this rule.

If a player describes something difficult but cool they want their character to do and it advances the story, don't roll. Just have them succeed.

There are few things that let the wind out of a group's sails as much as a character describing a creative solution well, only to roll a critical failure. Often when these situations happened, I would find myself let down as the DM too. I decided to stop letting that happen. If the scene and the moment are right, just let them succeed! If you're

not comfortable with automatic success, give the player advantage on the roll.

If the bard uses vicious mockery and their insult makes me laugh out loud, the target gets no saving throw.

The bard earned it.

No house rule is for everyone. You may find some of the rules on this list useful for your games, and I hope these ideas inspire you to come up with your own house rules for D&D. If you have house rules of your own you'd like to share, please email them to dragonmag@wizards.com with the subject "2020 House Rules".

Sam Hanshaw is an avid tabletop gamer and long-time Dungeon Master. He lives in Seattle with his wife, two cats, and a dragon named Puck.

BACK TO TOP

Next Issue: Dragon+ 31

Our travels take us to the United Kingdom and beyond, before we get stomped by kaiju!



As we venture further into the Year of the (moon) Rat, *Dragon+* takes a leaf out of explorer Volothamp Geddarm's book. We'll make use of the Far Traveler background to look at the surge in liveplay games in the United Kingdom, before setting our sights internationally to look at the most amazing places in the world to play D&D!

We'll also be testing our 2020 vision in this new decade. Is that a large creature nearby? Is it a huge creature in the distance? It's further away than that, you say. Well it must be gargantuan! As *Magic: The Gathering* unleashes *Ikorla: Lair of Behemoths*, we'll take a look at kaiju in D&D (if you thought that **tiny tarrasque** was cute, wait till you see what it grows up to become!).

Elsewhere we'll take a deeper dive into the *Explorer's Guide to Wildemount*, and also speak to author R.A. Salvatore about *Relentless*—including an in-depth look at Drizzt's dad, Zaknafein.

There's all this, plus more exclusive previews, all our regulars such as the best of the DMs Guild, another delve into the imposing *Dragon* archive, and much, *much* more!

(Contents subject to change)

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A belated happy new year and a big thank you to everyone involved with the creation of this issue.

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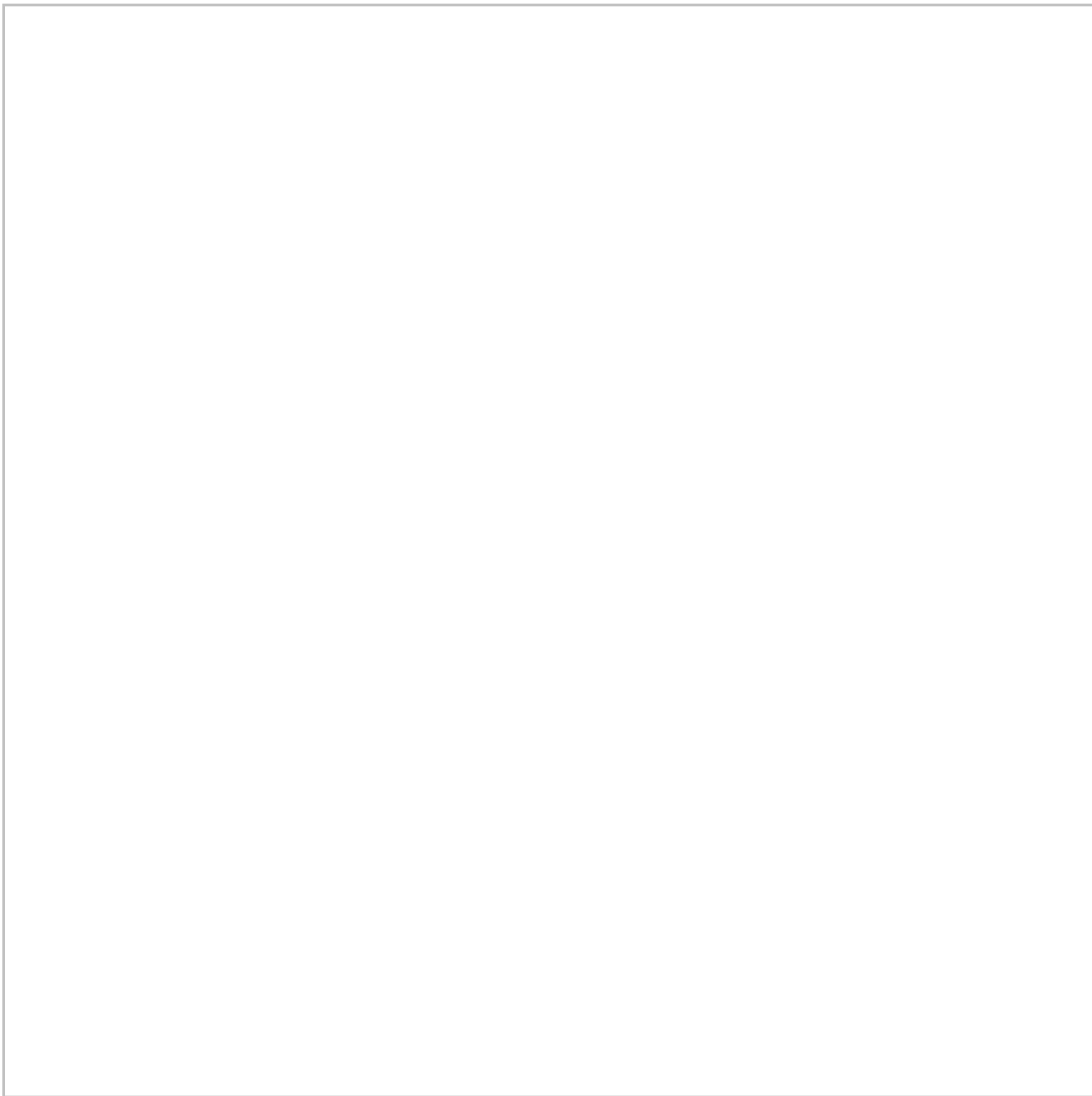
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